PREMIER ISSUE!

JUGGERNAUT

THE MAGAZINE OF EXTREME MUSIC

No. 1

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Megadeth's Dave Mustaine: Older, Wiser

Grindcore Sex

Max Cavalera and SOULFLY

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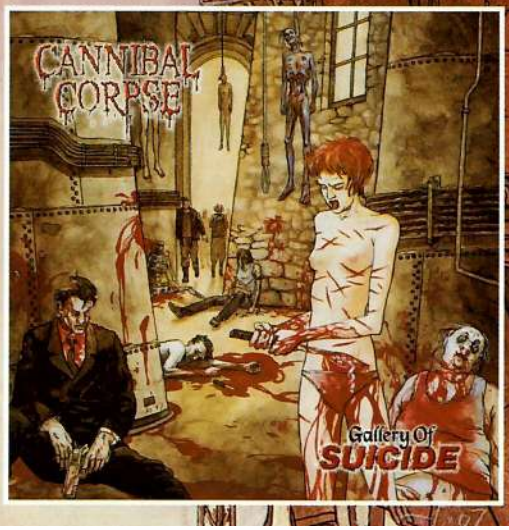

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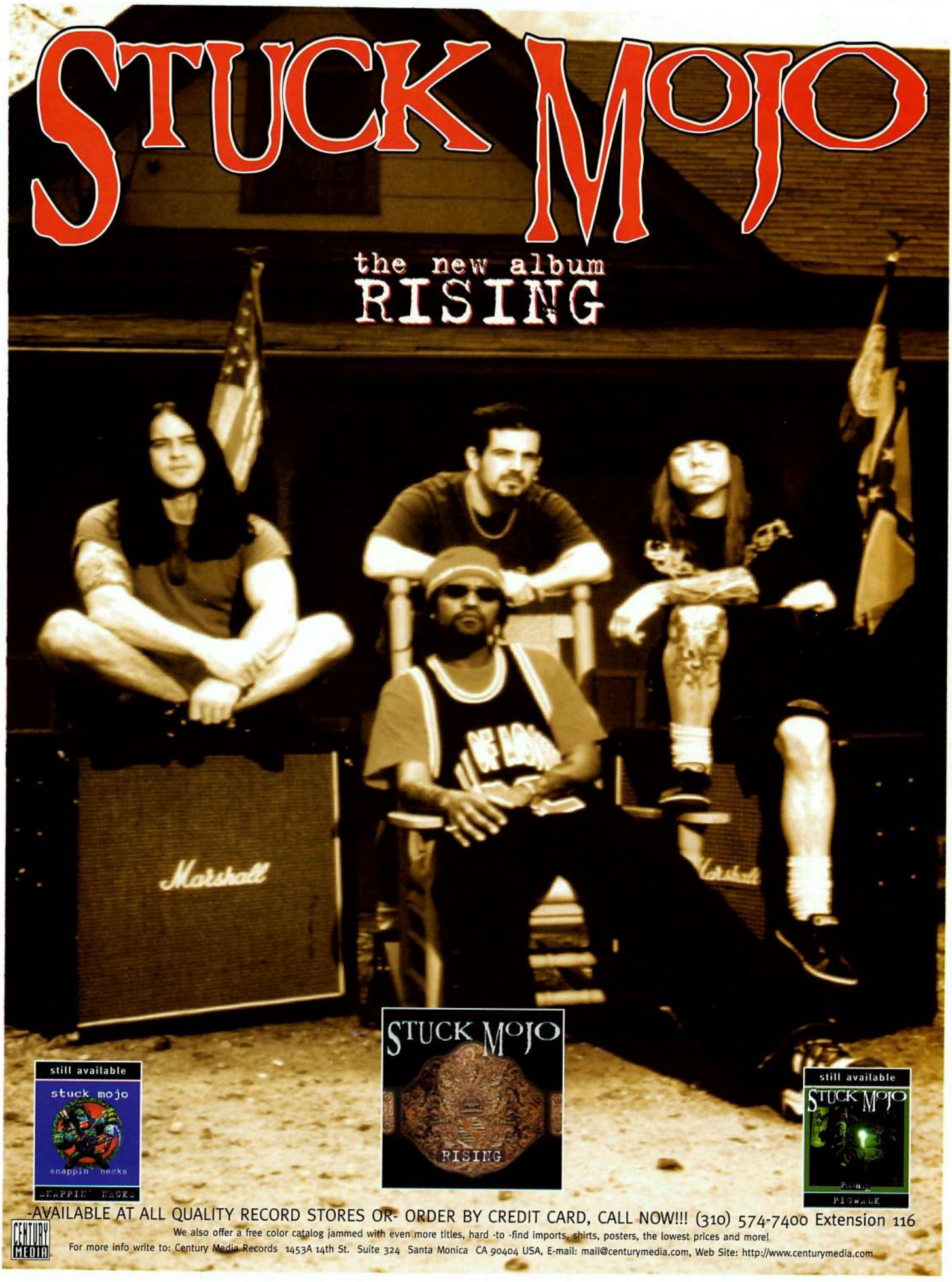

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COVER PHOTO of Karyn Crisis live in Roseland, New York, by Debbie Poccia. Can YOU tell if the blood is real?

Hell on Wheels

Welcome to the premiere issue of *Juggernaut: The Magazine of Extreme Music.* I'm Alex Johnson, and I'll be your host on this excursion into the sonic unknown.

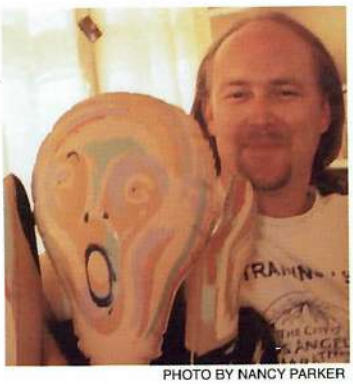

PHOTO BY NANCY PARKER

One of the first things you may notice is the diversity of sound to be had beneath the extreme music banner; we've got everything from a feature on Florida death metal giants Morbid Angel to a review of a noise compilation, even — gasp — a review of a newly reissued Miles Davis live album from 1974. Death metal, hardcore, industrial, noise, free jazz . . . the music rolls on, undaunted by categories and labels that only serve the interest of marketers and merchandisers.

By way of illustration, pick up the album *Sounds of the Animal Kingdom* by Brutal Truth, a supposed hardcore band, and you'll find an homage to avant-garde composer John Cage in the silent track "4' 22". Listen to the offerings of avant-jazz composer John Zorn and you'll hear songs that shift from surf music to cocktail jazz to grindcore within the space of a few bars; in fact, Zorn collaborated with Napalm Death drummer Mick Harris on the Painkiller project, described by *Juggernaut* writer Phil Freeman as sounding like "Ornette Coleman on bad biker crank, fronting . . . well, early Napalm Death." And so it goes. Take a step beyond the boundaries dictated by commercial radio formats and record company statisticians, and inhale the heady smell of freedom. You've entered *Juggernaut* country.

When Implosion Publishing's Dave Bauer gave me the nod to pull this project together, it came with the understanding that *Juggernaut* was not going to be just another heavy music zine. Believe you me, the last thing the world needs is another hero-worshiping, hype-regurgitating music mag that trades in glorified press releases. If the music doesn't stand on its own merits, it's not going to make it between our sheets. So if you want fanboy fawning over the likes of Deicide's Glen Benton, look elsewhere. The Deicide piece in this issue hews closer to the truth — good, bad or ugly — than anything you're likely to pull up on the 'Net.

So, given all that, why do we have an article written by Paula Hogan, publicist for Mayhem/Fierce Records? Isn't that a contradiction? No, not to me. Besides the fact that Hypocrisy, the band Paula covers in this issue, record on a different label, Paula is in the music business for her honest passion for the music — a passion that shows through in all her work.

Juggernaut's other writers come from a colorful patchwork of professions, from lawyers to Navy submariners to morticians. Some, like Gregory Nicoll and Ary Nussbaum, have established credits in pro music journalism, while others are just getting their feet wet. There's value to hearing an array of voices, especially when it comes to music. Again, homogeneity isn't the *Juggernaut* way.

My own foray into music writing came almost by accident. What seemed like a brief detour at the time — a few articles on the Gothic/industrial scene for the Australian zine *Dark Angel* (thanks to Gerry/Azriel, wherever you are) — snowballed into a steady stream of articles for *Implosion* and *Bloodsongs*, the other mags under the Implosion Publishing banner, as well as a short-lived death-metal column for the *Blood Servant* webzine.

Pretty soon I was wading through seas of CDs, training my ears to at least appreciate, if not always like, the most violent, nerve-shattering experiments in sound, from the psychedelic noise-noodlings of industrial pioneers Throbbing Gristle to the cranium-scouring cacophony of Japanese noise metallists Final Exit. And, while I was always the strange kid who listened to Miles Davis *and* Judas Priest *and* J.S. Bach, I discovered during this musical journey vast stretches of sonic territory I never knew existed.

This first issue is a map of that journey, and I'm grateful to be able to bring along such capable and keen-eyed travellers, whom you'll meet in the ensuing pages.

Finally, a few words of thanks to the people who've made this possible: First, Dave and Cynthia of Implosion Publishing for entrusting me with this gig and putting up with the temper tantrums and occasional outright nuttiness of a neophyte editor. I'd like to thank Paula Hogan for her unstinting help and support of Juggernaut, Gordon Conrad of Relapse/Release, John Paris at Earache, Matt Bower at Century Media, Matt Strangwayes of Pavement/NMG, Maria Abril of Nuclear Blast, and if I haven't mentioned everybody, e-mail me (politely) and I'll make restitutions. Thanks also to the wonderfully witty and talented contributors to *Juggernaut*, and, lastly, the featured artists, without whom there would not be a magazine.

Enjoy the ride!

—ALEX S. JOHNSON

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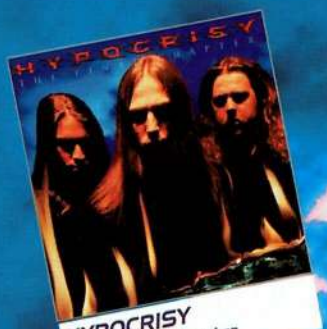

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Dr. Moreau's 13 Favorite Soundtracks

BY ALSACE MOREAU

If you're like me, you run into this problem a lot: You've got some willing sexual co-conspirator bound hand and foot, you've got the whips, the chains, the paddles and phallic implements, the knives, needles, clothespins, Tiger Balm, Ice-Blue Aqua Velva and possibly a belt sander or two. As you prepare to administer succulent punishment, to torment your eager and willing victim beyond the place where angels fear to tread, the delicious moaning of your partner mingles with the sound of . . .

Your roommate belching over the sound of *Roseanne* reruns from the TV. Or, if you're lucky, lighting a fart.

Every hormone in the vicinity, exit stage left.

Or, for those of you who choose to walk the straight and narrow (that's "narrow," not "marrow," damnit!):

You've brought home some succulent sexbunny or muscle-stud, undressed him or her delectably, popped open the Duncan Hines and scooped out a lapful. With pleasure you savor the voice of your lover whispering, "Oooooh baby, baby, baby," only to be suddenly assaulted by someone outside your window screaming, "Yo! Maxine! I came by to pick up the crack! You said you'd sell me a bunch of crack, remember? Remember?"

That's assuming you live in a neighborhood like mine. It could alternately be your next-door neighbor cranking Sonny & Cher at top volume, your Mom asking if you've taken out the trash, the guys down the street doing donuts on your front lawn in their '79 Trans Am. This could be anywhere; this could be everywhere.

The point is, as much as the purist in me — and maybe you — likes to think that a sexual partner (i.e., victim) gulping/gasping/mumbling/burbling in the throes of agony/ecstasy/profound ambivalence should be more than enough soundtrack for even my most twisted fantasies, the real world tends to stick its skanky, wart-encrusted dick in any hole you leave open, including your ears.

Naturally, if you're into the sex, then you, like me, probably forgot to put any music on. Big problem. Do not let this happen to you. This isn't the '70s where a bunch of acne-ridden punks are taking a shit on your front porch — the guys outside your windows have Glocks and AK-47s, pipe bombs and maybe bullhorns, and not even the most enthusiastic lover can drown out the sound of a gang war or a police helicopter dropping a load of napalm on your immediate neighborhood. Urgent times call for urgent measures.

So Dr. Moreau would like to help you pump up the volume with a few albums guaranteed to drown out anything, absolutely ANYTHING even remotely auditory your neighbors/roommates/family members throw your way.

Of course, music can only go so far toward drowning out the real world. If World War III finally starts, you're probably out of luck — but keep a couple of Carcass albums on hand just in case.

1. AC/DC: *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap*. In sex-music, as in other forms of pornography, sometimes Cheese -n- Sleaze cuts the mustard. Sadly, it's almost impossible to fuck to "Big Balls" with a straight face. But if you're like me, your CD player is programmable.

2. Black Sabbath: *Master of Reality.* For fuck-music, sometimes you just can't beat the classics. This quintessential Sabbath album from 1971 features Ozzy, Geezer Butler, Tony Iommi and Bill Ward.

3. Einstürzende Neubauten: *Strategies Against Architecture I & II.* I will affectionately refer to this as *"das Fückmüsick."* Classic proto-industrial from a time before "industrial" hit speed metal at 100 MPH and fused into Ministry. Both albums in this two-CD set are flawless works of German rhythmic weirdness. It's got atmosphere us Americanski types just can't do. Ranges from slow and spooky to harsh and grindy at a moment's notice.

4. Circle Jerks: *Group Sex.* Classic Jerks album from 1980 includes "Live Fast Die Young" and "Group Sex." A little fast for a good flogging, but perfect for a quickie. What could be mo' better for a quick porking while huffing some paint fumes and watching reruns of *I Love Lucy*?

5. Black Flag: *The First Four Years*. Pre-Rollins Flag. Ditto on being too fast for S&M, but perfect for a sleazy little screwfest. Includes such don't-miss git-downs as "Wasted" and "Six Pack." Play at maximum volume while engaged in losing what few morals you have left.

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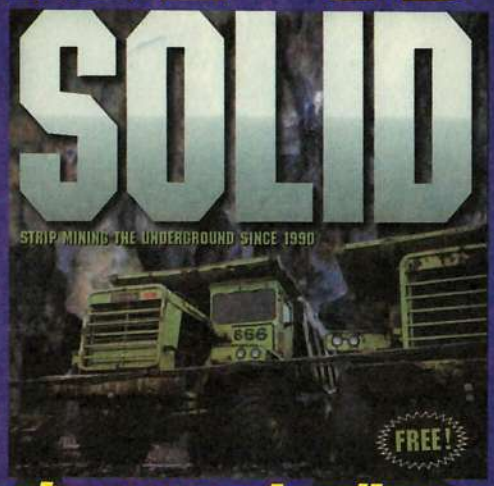

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9. Skinny Puppy: Everything. You can always count on the Pooch for grinding rhythms, explosions and general auditory weirdness. My favorite Pup albums for the old bump & grind are *Too Dark Park* and *Cleanse, Fold, and Manipulate.*

10. Ministry: *The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste* and *Psalm 69.* Biker Gang takes shitloads of speed and acid, and listens to way too much Kraftwerk. Then they decide to gang-fuck a passing school-bus full of cheerleaders on their way to a Sonic Youth concert. Little do they expect the cheerleaders to be carrying pickaxes and wearing foot-long strap-on dildos under their skirts. Then the Navy Seals show up with a truckload of crack and a pack of killer German shepherds. . . .

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Only sickos could keep a hard-on to this, but then, heh heh, you knew this already or you wouldn't be reading this magazine. If you play this at the proper volume, you will not make any friends in your apartment complex. Unless like-minded folks happen to be living within earshot (i.e., within a square mile or so). But either way you won't give a shit because you'll be deaf. Happily so. Rock on! J

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"Yo! Maxine! I came by to pick up the crack! You said you'd sell me a bunch of crack, remember? Remember?"

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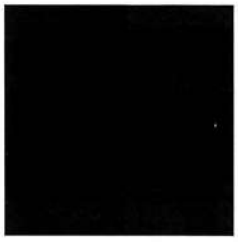

6. *Spinal Tap* (Soundtrack). A guilty pleasure, but will forever be my top-shelf material. I get a hard-on every time I hear "Heavy Duty" and "Sex Farm." "I just wanna make some eardrums bleed!" You and me both, Lenny. *(Yes, that's really what the cover looks like.)*

7. Motörhead: Everything. One of the best metal bands of all time, and the perfect soundtrack for recurrent rhythmic transgressions against the law of God and man. Lemmy is king.

8. Anthrax: *The Persistence of Time.* Anthrax still kicks ass, but my soft spot remains for this 1990 release with its stripped-down, no-bullshit metal sound. If you haven't tasted it you'll never know how much sensuality metal can have. Plus, any band with the balls to do a metal cover of annoying Joe Jackson Musak ("Got The Time") and make it work is all right in my book.

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11. Godflesh: Everything, especially *Godflesh* (their first album), *Songs of Love and Hate, Streetcleaner* and *Selfless.* This is the quintessential music-to-fuck-to band for hardcore Grindheads. Nothing matches *Streetcleaner* for sheer rhythmic pump. Play this loud and drop those leathers.

12. Napalm Death: Everything. If you're going to fuck around with this music, you should protect yourself and your partner — this is, after all, the age of safe sex, or "safer" sex to be really correct about it, since no sex involving Napalm Death can really be entirely safe. Once you've put Napalm Death on the stereo, you've entered the hot zone.

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Music You May Have Missed

BY PHIL FREEMAN

An amazing thing happened on MTV not long ago. As part of a series of self-promoting clips called "influences," Jon Spencer of the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion expressed the sulky opinion that rock 'n' roll should be treated with greater reverence by the American populace. Presumably, this was a requirement of all of us collectively — some sort of Affirmative Action for white boys with guitars. His explanation for this bold call to action? That rock 'n' roll is "America's only real contribution to the world."

Apparently Mr. Spencer had never heard of John Coltrane.

This pathetic (and self-serving in the finest indie-rock tradition) outburst is a perfect example of the tragic blindness that exists within the world of underground music. Most "extreme music" fans foolishly fall into the same trap. But I don't blame them personally — not everyone is as big of an asshole as Jon Spencer. Most underground music fans just don't know that music exists other than heavy rock (or drum and bass, or whatever their chosen genre of specialization is), which is more than capable of ripping their fucking faces right off.

This ignorance is directly due to concentrated media effort. For about the last 40 years, rock 'n' roll music and later its whitened-up offshoot, "rock," have dominated the American and European mass-cultural debates, as conducted in music magazines and on television and radio, to such an extent that even jazz, which is one of the most adaptable, vital and nonchalantly radical forms of music ever created, must take a back seat.

And it is no accident that, even 30 years after rock music last held any real revolutionary fire or potential for social impact (not to mention how long it's been since anyone's even fucked with the melodic template on which rock is based), the rock paradigm remains the filter through which all music must pass to achieve even the most lame and cursory examination by critics (or perhaps "pop historians" is a better term; anybody remember the last time *Rolling Stone* or *Spin* actually showed the balls to really *criticize* a major pop album?). No one should be surprised that rock critics continue to insist that white-boy guitar rock represents some sort of insurgency.

The rock-critic establishment belong to the single-most narcissistic generation to ever stalk the American cultural landscape. The '60s leftovers who edit the reviews pages in most major magazines cling endlessly to withered memories of their pot-fogged youth and continue over and over to market them as some sort of epiphanic, world-altering epoch of revolution. They drool on and on about the magical '60s (some of the hipper ones, like Greil Marcus and Chuck Eddy, can be heard to stimulate themselves over the test-marketing of punk in the '70s as well) and manage to so thoroughly occupy themselves with their onanist reveries that the real musical revolutions of the past 20 or so years have utterly escaped their notice. Even as corporations buy up and vomit onto the auction block every last anthem of once-sincere rebellion (even Iggy couldn't resist the tide), the 40-something generation of rock writers cannot bring themselves to admit that they have been supplanted. Their monumental egotism (shared with everyone in their age bracket, from the priapic U.S. president on down the ladder) will not bear the truth: After 30 years of corporatization, "rock" as a genre is about as revolutionary as Dixieland jazz.

So what's left? What is really "extreme"? That's the point of this column, really — to point out that there *are* new and vital musical movements afoot, and to show the path to those who wish to join the hike into the future. Don't get me wrong here. I am nobody's fucking snob. I love, for example, Mortician. I love the Australian band Blood Duster (who should have a new record out by the time you read this, and you should own it too, fuckers). But my point remains the same: Rock music is no longer a revolutionary form. It remains trapped by its structural traditions — the blues-based song form, the 4/4 rhythm, the guitar solo, the egotistical, self-obsessed lead vocalist.

What's left? What's really "extreme"?

If your ears, like mine, have become callused and weary of the brutalizations of various garage-spawned riff terrorists, then check out the names I'm laying down in this column. Some of the items listed may not be the newest thing out; some of them may be decades-old reissues, or insanely rare and pricey Japanese imports or something, but every one of these records is in my own personal collection, and more than half I spent my own good money on. You won't get a more fair and honest endorsement than that.

The three groups I have chosen to rant about in this first column are God, Borbetomagus and the pianist Matthew Shipp.

First, God: They are the only band I have ever heard whose music is an accu-

rate reflection of their name, and vice versa. God sound like . . . *more* than anything you've ever heard in your damn useless life. This is partly because God have between nine and 12 members at any given time on any given song. On their most recent studio album, *The Anatomy of Addiction* (Big Cat), the instrumentation broke down like this: vocals, tenor sax, samples, alto sax, baritone sax, two guitars, electric viola, two electric bass, double bass, percussion, drums and bass clarinet. The sheer force generated by three bass players and two guitarists playing looping, thundering riffs in avalanche cycles cannot be withstood. God begin, and you just lie there and hope to survive. (By the way, for those who need some underground credibility with your music, one of the two guitarists is Justin Broadrick from Godflesh. Also, John Zorn played on God's first studio album, *Possession* (Caroline). . . . In case that matters.)

Song titles — such as "On All Fours," "Driving the Demons Out" and "Body Horror" — reflect the obsessions of frontman and mastermind Kevin Martin (who has too many side projects to list here, but Techno Animal is one of the best, if you think you can handle it). The lyrics aren't really the point, though; the *groove* is. And God are all about groove, though they are less reminiscent of James Brown or Funkadelic than of that tank in the first Terminator flick, rolling endlessly forward over a landscape paved with human skulls. I cannot recommend God highly enough. Check them out; by the end, you'll be praying for mercy.

Borbetomagus are about the only band I can think of who may make a noise equal to God. And they're more terrifying, because Borbetomagus is a goddamned *trio* — two saxophones and a guitar. No time for bullshit, no time for mercy, no time for nice things like melody, rhythm or structure. Just get up there and play until your lungs burst or the tips of your damn fingers fly off. This is another band for which no known predecessor exists and for which no honest comparison can be made. They are louder and harder than anything you will ever hear again. At New York's Knitting Factory a few years ago, they blew Merzbow and Masonna off the fucking stage. People flee the room when Borbetomagus get going.

They've been around since 1978, and they've put out about 15 CDs on various labels, but mostly on Agaric Records, which they run themselves out of saxophonist Jim Sauter's house. Maybe the best starting point is their 1993 CD, *Buncha Hair That Long,* which demonstrates better than some of their other discs one of the most impressive things about them, for my money: the *beauty* of their interaction. Because interaction, constant and three-way musical debate, is the center of the Borbeto experience. Nobody ever takes an individual solo. All three players are playing at all times during any piece, and all are playing at top volume — make no mistake about that. Borbetomagus play so loudly and work with electronics and sound modification so adroitly that it's damn near impossible to identify who's making what sound at what time. Even the trio themselves say they sometimes become confused listening to playbacks of their shows.

PHOTO BY DAVID BLAU/HET APOLLOHUIS

Borbetomagus's Jim Sauter, Don Dietrich and Donald Miller in 1991.

But if you let the sound wash over you, begin to adjust yourself to the constant flood of distortion and ear-shredding volume, you will discover that there is a delicate and sensitive piece of music unfolding. Trust me. Noise can be a gorgeous thing, and Borbetomagus are the best proof I can offer you. They cannot be praised highly enough, not only for what they have accomplished in 20 years, but because they continue to push on, never looking back.

Finally, I give you the music of Matthew Shipp. Shipp is a pianist who is achieving a fair degree of notoriety lately, with the help of patron Henry Rollins (there's that old underground credibility again!). But Shipp's music needs no celebrity plugs to deserve attention. He's more than likely the most innovative and consistently interesting jazz musician working right now. His works as a solo artist, in trio form, and with the David S. Ware quartet are uniformly worth hearing, and some of the performances he has turned out should be mandatory listening for any idiots who still think Phish and Blues Traveler define the term "improvised music" — in any aspect.

Shipp avoids the traps set by both sides of the jazz world, never letting himself be bogged down by the need to perform "standards," or even play standard chords or melodies, but neither does he overextend improvisations into the empty gestures, the grunts and autistic-child percussive displays of Cecil Taylor (possibly the most overrated musician currently active). Instead he redefines the listener's notions of beauty and melody moment by moment. Particularly in groups where he collaborates with bassist William Parker (the other half of his musical spirit), the sheer lush gorgeousness of the thick globs of music which emerge, fully formed upon the instant, from his keyboard will never less than astonish.

A starting point for this amazing musician is, again as with Borbetomagus, hard to choose. From my own record collection, I choose *Prism*, a trio CD recorded in 1993, with Parker on bass and Whit Dickey on drums. (For some reason, Shipp and Parker have lately parted ways with Dickey and now perform with Susie Ibarra, a young drummer from New York whose slight figure hides a powerful stroke and great individualism on the kit.) *Prism* consists of two pieces running for about an hour. Your attention will never flag during that time. And after you've heard it, your thoughts when you hear the word "jazz" will never be the same. Check it out.

PHOTO BY JULIETTE CONROY/2.13.61 RECORDS

Matthew Shipp

In a perfect world, having just read these words, you would now be running to your local imaginative record store to pick up work by these three artists, and then coming home to have your mind scorched and boundaries shattered by the miraculous artistry and overwhelming power you never knew was out there.

But in the real world, if I just can keep one person from buying the new Pearl Jam CD, I've done my job. So reassure me, in my small way. Go buy some real edge music. And, respectively, if you've got something you think I'd dig, *please* send it to me courtesy of this magazine. Anything: cassette, CD — anything but vinyl.

Until next time . . . J

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Vision Of Disorder's Hardcore Earquake

By JERRY RUTHERFORD

A bouncy cadence coils around atmospheric vocal air, halts for a split second and ferociously explodes. The momentum then throws itself into a brisk, hammering barrage that surges head-on into rhythmically rigorous spasms and spirals back through an even more seething onslaught than before. These are the sounds of "Element," the opening salvo on Vision Of Disorder's self-titled Roadrunner/Supersoul bodyslam. One listen and it's clear that the Long Island, New York-bred quintet's hardcore ear-quake is more dangerously dynamic than the stripped-down, charging chug-stomp steamrolled by many of their conventional sounding peers.

"We just try to do things a different way," says vocalist Tim Williams. "Sometimes bands won't play certain things because they're afraid it's not hardcore, and if you set limits for yourself like that, you don't go anywhere. The bottom line is we want to experiment. We're not afraid to not be called a hardcore band even though we are. We do what we want no matter what."

What Vision of Disorder does is create volatile musical maelstroms that veer from all-out aural war to dark, melodic drifts to echoes of eerie brood. They can be as muscle-bound as their touring mates Madball, tread into Tool-esque uneasiness and often bring to mind Bad Brains — all within the span of a single song. Involved as it sounds, the mesh is amazingly fluid — not to mention filtered with Williams' switch-hitting throat hurl, Matt Baumbach and Mike Kennedy's off-kilter guitar-kill and the Mike Fleischmann/Brendon Cohen tag-team clobber of ballistic bottom-end. When it all comes together during tracks like "Viola" or "D.T.O.," the result is rather unique, to say the least.

By the same token, Vision of Disorder also make it a point to distinguish themselves lyrically and philosophically as well. Amid a scene where lifestyle practices and social politics are paraded as much as a band's musical punch, Williams says he prefers a less blatant approach when it comes to such concerns. "I like to write things that stimulate thought. But it's like with the music — we don't pin ourselves down. I want people to read my lyrics and think whatever they want. If you say 'Do this!' or 'Do that!' you're going to loose a lot of fans right away, because they don't think that way. People are going to see things how they want, and you can't really change that. Our only agenda is to have as many people as possible hear us."

And that audience is exactly what motivates Vision of Disorder most. After packing clubs in New York, having their pre-Roadrunner releases go into multiple pressings and producing a powerhouse underground following, it's crucial they capitalize on that foundation and attract an appeal outside of those already in the know.

PHOTO BY CHRIS TOLIVER/ROADRUNNER RECORDS

"Being in New York and the Tri-State area has definitely helped us get where we are, but the road is what's going to make us," Williams emphasizes. "We've already gone out with Madball and on our own, but that was just on the East Coast. When we get to places like Utah or Wisconsin, it's going to be a whole different world. We have to branch off of what we've already done and keep doing well. We've got to reach new people now and grow even more." J

TH ROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

TODAY IS THE DAY to control your future

By John Mincemoyer

I know not who I am. Two specific events occurred that have totally altered my being. And I am powerless. I have fought, but it was futile, so now I succumb; I have no alternative.

The first event: I read Alex Constantine's *Psychic Dictatorship in the U.S.A.* Yes, it is pure conspiracy-theory drivel, and I should probably be put to the thumbscrews for reading it, but long-dormant gears of thought began to turn.

Radar death rays from space? Why not? Cults funded and basically run by the CIA? Not completely out of the realm of possibility. A book like this may by self-serving and one-dimensional, but it is just the kind of information that continuously gnaws at you. There are too many holes in the stories, too many doors slammed shut and one too many interviews that go nowhere. I am sure you understand what I mean. I wonder, could all this conspiracy-theory be a smokescreen in itself? Was David Koresh really a fruitcake? Lobotomies? And those space cults — are they merely dejected and ostracized Trekkies?

The second: I listened to Today Is The Day's Relapse Records debut, *Temple of the Morning Star*. Let's just say that once the album finished playing, I had an epiphany. Of my own free will? That remains to be seen. Some dark, powerful force, unbeknownst to my feeble mind, reached into my psyche and turned my existence inside-out.

Shortly afterward, I noticed a floral delivery van parked across the street from my house. It has been there for the last two weeks. Coincidence?

A realization dawned. (Whether it was planted or not, I do not know.) But it lay before me like a beguiling lover and then smacked me across the face like a two-bit whore. Was I a guinea pig in some twisted mind-control experiment?

You can forget about that backward-masking argument. A conspiracy? Complete domination of our world? Barney? Today Is The Day?

So I lay, curled in a dark recess of my shattered mind, struggling with my contemplations. And I was accosted by the purveyor of this madness. His name, unassuming to the ear, is Steve Austin. He controls Today Is The Day and, as I found out (much too lately), he controls that unseen force that has enveloped me.

But wait, Steve Austin? Was he not the Six-Million Dollar Man? But, of course, the minds of the masses had to be softened some way, and what better way then through television. (Of course, a certain actor had folded easily due to the injections and promises of syndication. But that is another story.)

Austin began by describing the facade of his work so that I might understand the forces I had unwittingly set into motion.

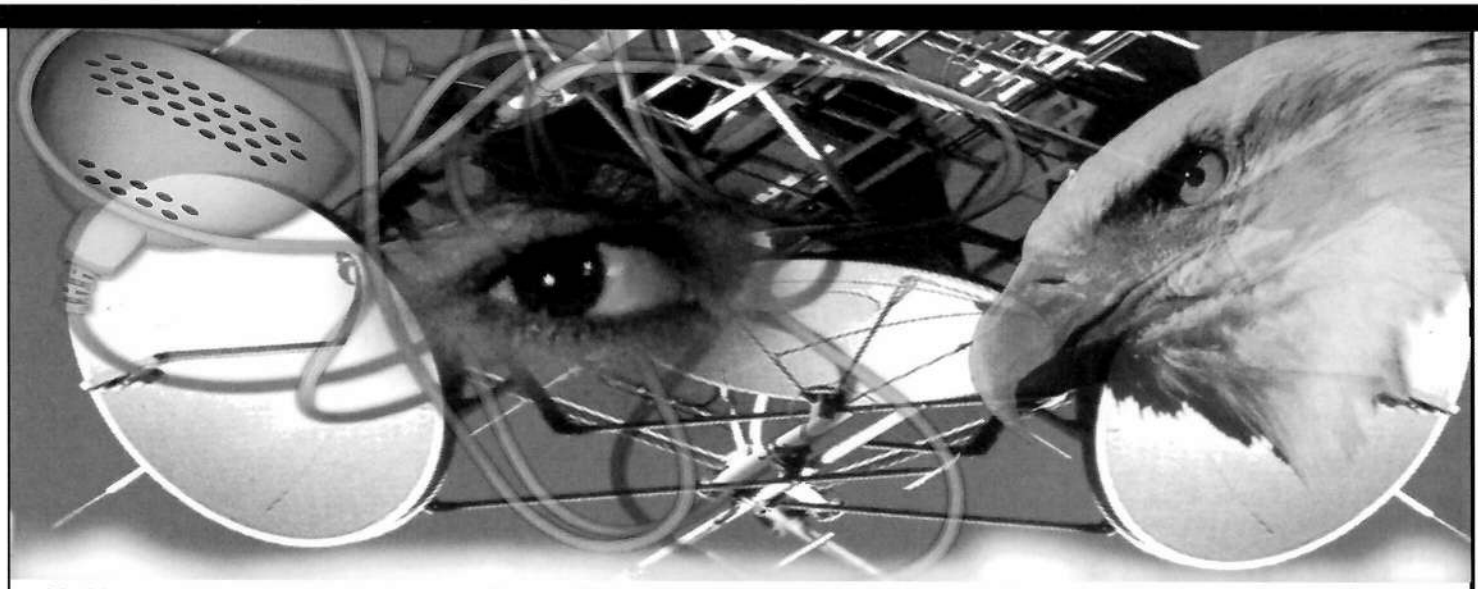
"'Temple of the Morning Star' is the name of a Satanic cult in Denver, Colorado," he explained. "I felt the title appropriate, because, doesn't that seem to be the shape of the way things are going in the world? It is 1998, but here we have a Satanic cult alive and well. That, to me, like the name suggests, reeks of overall evil."

Overall evil indeed. And insidious. How could one not notice the blatant disregard of morality and decency? Aye, he has the serpent's forked tongue, this one. And of the apple I bite. (Matter of fact, I had one this morning and it caused one of my teeth to ache. Strange, since then there seems to be a humming noise coming from inside my mouth.)

Before continuing, as if on cue with my thoughts, Austin hurled scattered images at me, grainy yet ominous. My mind was able to absorb that Today Is The Day have been in existence for roughly five years. They released three full-length albums on Amphetamine Reptile Records and toured with the likes of Japan's almighty Zeni Geva and apocalyptic noise gods Neurosis. So Today Is The Day's saturation of the masses had already begun. Plainly, I understood the plot, but my mind was beyond recovery. MK-ULTRA was child's play compared

Relapse Records

Today is the Day



with this.

Would radar death rays beam down upon us from space? Are they doing so right now? My head hurts. My fern seems to have wilted since I put it next to one of my speakers. And somehow *Temple of the Morning Star* is the only disc in my CD player. Why must irony taste so bitter, yet sound so sweet?

But Mr. Austin's plan was at a stalemate. (Funny, I do not know exactly how I was communicating with Mr. Steve Austin. I will say that my blender kept turning on and off, and, if anybody could have seen me, they would have sworn I was engrossed with my toaster oven). "Basically, we felt that AmRep was not moving in the same direction that we wanted to go. They were not pushing any truly heavy and experimental bands. We are an extreme band. Relapse has been totally cool with everything, especially in regard to the album. They did not push us in any way or pressure us with a schedule. They have been supportive of our vision and have tried to make everything as easy as possible for us. They were concerned with how the music came out and if that vision was what we wanted or not. That to me was, and is, really important."

Unwittingly, he tripped, because he mentioned "experiments," and now we find out that Relapse Records is in on the conspiracy. Maybe this is where everything is centralized: the hive, per se. Who knows? And what exactly are we to make of this "vision?" I say he "tripped," but now I realize that he is just toying with me. I am but a pawn — a feeble mouthpiece.

My television only receives two channels now: Praise the Lord and QVC Home Shopping Network. I cut the cable a week ago.

There seemed to have been a small problem with the band's old bass player. Mr. Austin explained: "Our old bass player no longer fit within the idea of Today Is The Day. So we did not use a bass player on this album. It wasn't necessary, because we used an organic bass sample, filtered it and ran it through a keyboard. With the new album it made everything heavier. The album sounds fuller, and the low-end is just devastating. As for playing live, everything is turned up as loud as possible."

I hadn't figured it out until it reared its ugly head — all those rock shows I had attended with the ear-bleeding volume levels . . . turning the sound up so loud that you cannot hear the lower end of the sound spectrum and what exactly is being drilled into your brain: You know, things like "Eat your vitamins," "Drink your milk," and "Do well in school." Was Milli Vanilli not a calculated scheme on someone's part? My questions seemed to be falling on deaf ears.

Never question. Think of this as free advice. Big Brother is watching. You can be eradicated without warning. You continue to wander through the motions on a daily basis, nothing more then carefully orchestrated and manipulated zombies. Eventually you will either be integrated or eradicated.

My mouth is humming again. I never feared the dentist until now. Notice how they always put you "under," and with what? Laughing gas. Think about it.

Mr. Austin is his own movement's weapon. He is the eye atop the pyramid. He is a loose cannon. And he works outside the boundaries. *Temple of the Morning Star* is the ammunition. This apocalyptic vision is utterly awe-inspiring and frightening in its density and complexity. Mind-controlling waves of guitar wash over you, and the calculated rhythms of the drums drill into your brain softening it for the painfully real negativity of the vocals. *Temple of the Morning Star* holds a violently tangible and intensely caustic quality that is lacking in most recorded efforts.

To say I am addicted is an understatement. This album controls my being. I live in a constant state of paranoid bliss now that few would understand.

"So, Mr. Austin," I asked, "could you say that *Temple of the Morning Star*'s genesis and subsequent fruition is a by-product of our ignorant world running amok?"

"Yes, *Temple of the Morning Star* is negative, and, like you say, frightening, but I write what I feel, and that is just the end result. I cannot lie about my feelings. I write about the world around me and those things that I see. Unlike what some people would lead you to believe, this world is no utopia." In other words, the masses need direction and Today Is The Day will be our Pied Piper. The final clue has been revealed. But the clock stopped ticking a while ago.

A raw nerve was struck somewhere, and he said, "Sometimes the world presses down on a human being and that pressure is almost unbearable. Our name, Today Is The Day, comes into play here as it symbolizes the thought to strike back and take action. It also symbolizes that nothing is going too far. We are trying to push things, ourselves and our expression to the limit."

The limits of what? Human comprehension? Push my buttons: One for pleasure? One for pain? One for everything in between? You think me mad? You have no idea of the power that Today Is The Day wields. Submit now and things may be easier for you than for me.

Mr. Austin mentioned something about mind-erasure, yet I was too out of it to comprehend the ramifications. The fleeting, hazy memories are systematically erased by a power I cannot see, only feel.

And all the while, Today Is The Day is provided for my listening pleasure.

By the way, my mouth stopped humming. **J**

John Mincemoyer is a submariner in the U.S. Navy. This article was delivered via shortwave radio in encrypted form from somewhere off the Gulf coast. Mincemoyer's current whereabouts are unknown.

In Flames: Speed, melody and even Nordic folk comprise the kindling for this fire

By DAVE BAUER

When Anders Fridén was growing up, he spent his free time listening to big metal bands of the early '80s — just like many teenagers at the time.

Also like many teenagers at the time, after he weened himself on heavy metal, the lad from Gothenburg, Sweden, started a band.

"We couldn't play from the beginning," he says. "No one! We just jammed around . . . but we got better!"

And that he did. But Fridén's influences from the '80s, particularly Iron Maiden, endured. Maiden's twin guitar and heavy melodic structure is something the group have certainly incorporated into their sound.

However, In Flames are definitely not a retro-Maiden tribute band. Fridén's ripping, fierce vocals are nothing like the silky-smooth stylings of Bruce Dickinson. Speed-metal pioneers Kreator also shaped Fridén greatly in his formative years.

"It's hard to put a label on what kind of music we play," Fridén says. "I used to say we play heavy metal. But we've never been a part of the typical Stockholm scene. We have speed and melody but aggression as well. The way we combine melody and aggression — that's why people like us, I think."

Another influence for the band is Nordic folk music. Jesper, the guitarist and a main songwriter, is the son of a folk musician. He was trained on the violin growing up, and his Nordic folk roots have remained with him ever since.

"[Nordic music] has a sad mood, but it's still happy," Fridén says. "Today, the folk influence isn't that obvious — but it just comes so naturally to us, it'll always be with us."

Though the band's cover art features detailed fantastic and horrific art, Fridén, who writes the lyrics, says it's mostly decoration and doesn't really have much meaning to him. He says he prefers to write more about down-to-earth subjects.

"I look at what is happening around me. I'm not interested in writing about scary made-up things. I'm not into the art kind of thing." He pauses, then adds, "Although tomorrow I'm going with my girlfriend to an art museum, so you never know."

In Flames formed around the fall of 1990 but went through a couple of line-up changes and didn't record their first demo until 1993. They attracted the attention of Swedish independent label Wrong Again Records, who signed the band and released their first album, *Lunar Strain*, in 1994.

The band's combination of melody and aggression have made them somewhat well-known in Europe, and even in the Pacific. In fact, In Flames played several club dates in Japan this February, selling out 1,200-capacity venues before ever stepping foot on the continent.

Fridén says he is very happy with their numbers in Japan, but stresses that they're still just a bunch of regular guys. However, not everyone holds the same opinion.

"A lot of times, fans think we're very huge and they get kind of depressed when they see us," he says, laughing. "We try to meet as many fans as possible. I am not that arrogant of a person. I can't play the role of being a big asshole. It's nice seeing how happy fans get when they get to talk to you."

Despite their success is the aforementioned markets, In Flames are still virtual unknowns in the United States, even though their last two albums, *The Jester Race* and *Whoregasam,* were released on one of the larger U.S. metal labels, Nuclear Blast America.

"We'd love to play in the U.S," Fridén says. "People say to me, 'There's *a lot* of people in the U.S., you must have some success over there,' and I just say, 'Nope.' There's been a lot of positive reactions from magazines and radio stations, but nothing's happened on the touring side of things."

Even though In Flames won't be traveling down Route 66 anytime soon, the band still spend a lot of time on the road in Sweden. And, like any band who spend enough time on the road, some crazy shit is bound to happen — and literally in one case.

The band's manager, who called himself "the destroyer," had a penchant for drinking too much, Fridén says. He would often get out of hand on the tour bus, throwing bottles or puking on the seats.

"One morning, I see the bus driver, and he's laughing his ass off," Fridén says. "I'm wondering what's so funny. Then he points to the tour manager, sleeping naked like a baby in the womb, on the hood of the bus. He's all covered with shit and puke. It was funny." J

Guillotine

Hoping to keep heads rolling into the thrash baskets of yore

By ANDREW CORSON

In 1985, I was a bored 13-year-old. Music was my thing, and the drudgeries of eighth grade were made tolerable only by regular Saturday jaunts to the local record store to scour the metal section in hopes of scoring something new by one of the bands that acted as my life's blood back then. It was at that record store that I went to hell and back with Venom, experienced war and pain with Voivod, listened with rapt attention as Celtic Frost spun morbid tales and witnessed Destruction handing down a sentence of death. These were magical times for metal, laying the foundation for much to come.

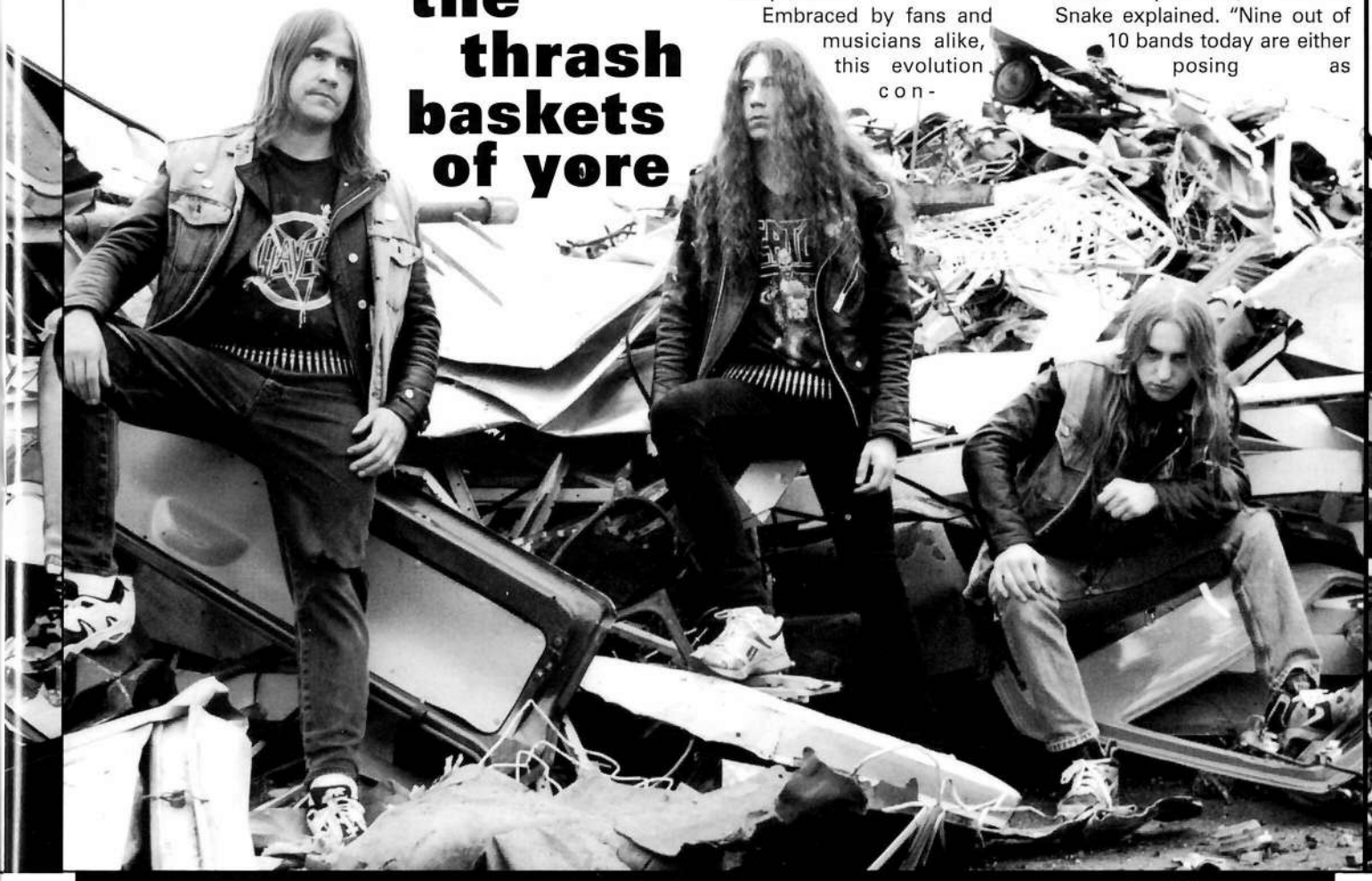
Eventually, metal's face began to change as each new stylistic edge carved another wrinkle into its thickening skin. Musicians honed their abilities, songwriting became labyrinthine, and new layers and textures were added to the complexion.

Embraced by fans and musicians alike, this evolution continues. But, occasionally, in the face of all this change, I push aside stacks of CDs, break out some of those old records and think about when life was a bit simpler, more straightforward and ultimately more honest.

I'm not the only one who waxes nostalgic over the music of yesteryear. As a new generation of bands takes the brutal, straight-ahead elements of old and stirs up new yet familiar ripples in the metallic sea, riding with them is the Swedish band Guillotine. Listening to the band's debut, *Under The Guillotine* (Necropolis Records), is like opening a mid-'80s time capsule.

Guillotine pride themselves on possessing that attitude — of an era when simply playing music was the main agenda — and the trio make no pretenses about who they are or what their purpose is.

"There is an honesty in Guillotine you rarely find in this whole spectacle," bassist Snake explained. "Nine out of 10 bands today are either posing as



Satanists or making their whole appearance seem like a joke. Guillotine is what you see on the back of the album, nothing else. We don't claim to be anything that we aren't. We are three guys playing the music we grew up on and praising the old masters 10 years after they're gone. We don't need an image or a religious conviction in our band, just good, plain speed metal."

Guillotine's involvement in the thrash revival was more of an accident than a calculated move. With the trio, who also include singer/guitarist Spider and drummer Cobra, heavily involved in the powerfully melodic band Nocturnal Rites, Guillotine began as a side project and gradually metamorphosed into a major priority. "We had a truckload of riffs and songs begging to be put together," Snake said. "When people heard it, they were totally blown away, so we decided to keep going."

The band recorded a demo that generated heavy interest from metal labels like Osmose and Malicious. The attention, along with positive reactions from fans, caught the band by surprise and landed them a prime spot on the Necropolis roster. "When we made the demo, we were amazed there was even label interest. We sent the demo out to the labels we thought most likely would enjoy our kind of music. This was back in '95, before the big wave of revival bands. So, at the time we signed ourselves to Necropolis, we were not aware of all the offers that would come in after the papers with Necropolis had been inked."

But for the moment at least, Snake said he is comfortable with the current label situation. "We are very happy to be a part of Necropolis," he says. "They have worked really hard for us so far."

Rather than limiting themselves to the rather narrow thrash scope, Snake, Spider and Cobra continue to keep Nocturnal Rites very much alive and have even recently signed a deal for the band with Century Media. Although the two bands are fairly far from each other on the metal spectrum, Snake said the stylistic differences are complementary in the musicians' minds and create a sense of wholeness as opposed to conflict.

"As a musician, you have a wide variety of influences," he said. "You constantly get new ideas, and what it's really all about is to sort out these ideas and put them where they belong. Having two bands playing totally different styles has never been a problem. I would be more scared if I were in two bands playing exactly the same kind of music."

As Snake admitted, the difference between contemporary bands and their mighty forefathers is subtle at best. "Most bands sound the same as the old bands did in their prime. Still, I think a lot of the newer bands are better than the old, considering the fact that musicians in general play a lot better nowadays. Also, the recording quality has improved a lot, and I think bands are more careful with their performances today."

And, while Snake confessed that Guillotine are not incredibly original, he said the fresh delivery of their music and dedication to a very real lifestyle are what truly set them apart. These men take their denim 'n' leather wardrobe seriously, he said, not to mention their overly familiar song titles like "Tormentor" and "Crucifixion."

"I think what music is all about is having a good time — at least that's why I'm playing it," he said. "But there is no humor in us wearing Slayer shirts or bullet belts. That's what we look like in private. As far as lyrics go, sure, our topics have been used over and over. But I think there would be more humor if we were singing about Satan and Hell. As long as we can do our thing, we will."

And that is Guillotine's plan — and it's all for the good of metal.

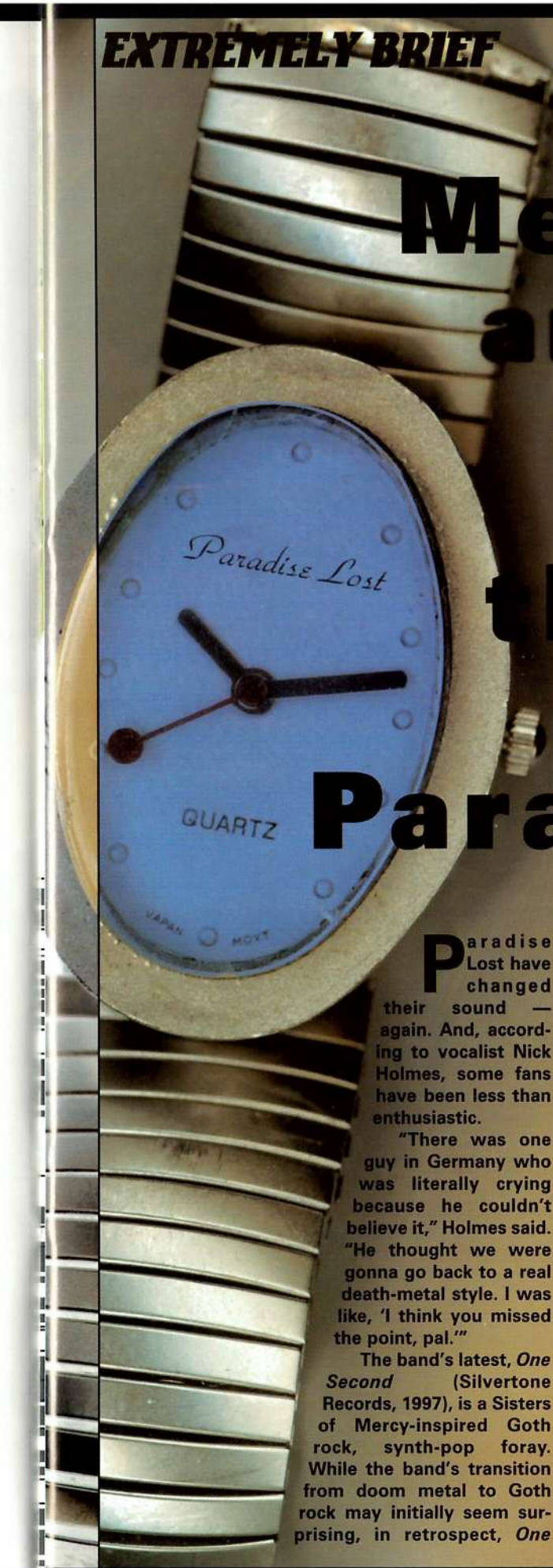
"When the old bands decided to head for new directions, new bands — hungry bands — took their place at the speed-metal throne," Snake said. "I think this revival of thrash metal is what the fans have yearned for. Hopefully more bands will join this revolution and make thrash metal stay for good." **J**

You won't find any Satanic claptrap in these boys' lyrics, but you might notice an overload of denim, leather and bulletbelts. Top to bottom: Snake (bass), Cobra (drums) and Spider (vocals, guitar)..

Facing page: Spider, Cobra and Snake.

By ALBERT CLAPPS

Metal fans are having One Second thought about Paradise Lost



Paradise Lost have changed their sound — again. And, according to vocalist Nick Holmes, some fans have been less than enthusiastic.

"There was one guy in Germany who was literally crying because he couldn't believe it," Holmes said. "He thought we were gonna go back to a real death-metal style. I was like, 'I think you missed the point, pal.'"

The band's latest, *One Second* (Silvertone Records, 1997), is a Sisters of Mercy-inspired Goth rock, synth-pop foray. While the band's transition from doom metal to Goth rock may initially seem surprising, in retrospect, *One Second* makes perfect sense; this is a band who have made a career out of taking risks.

The roots of this development stretch back to early 1990 when Paradise Lost released their debut, *Lost Paradise* (Caroline/Peaceville). Even then they showed inklings of creativity and slowed standard-issue death metal down to a languid pace. But nobody could have predicted what they would do next. *Gothic* (Caroline/Peaceville), released a year later, married death metal's vocal roar and eerily-tuned guitar with elements of Goth rock, replete with female soprano and orchestral pomp. This record still sends ripples through today's modern-day doom metal scene.

One Second, however, is "just a different approach," said guitarist Gregor Mackintosh. "I wouldn't say it's a departure," he said. "We're still using the same guidelines for songs we've always used. For instance, we're never going to write a happy song. But I think the main difference between this one and the other records we've done is that a lot of the aggression has been taken out of it and a lot more melancholy put in. We've just tried to make things a bit more subtle. . . . I mean, if you were to listen to the first album and then the new one, it would sound completely different. But if you listen to all the albums back-to-back up to the new album, I think it's a reasonably obvious progression."

After *Gothic,* Paradise Lost continued defining their own identity. Records like *Shades of God* (Metal Blade/Music For Nations, 1992), *Icon* (Metal Blade/Music For Nations, 1993) and *Draconian Times* (Relativity/Music For Nations, 1995) placed a greater emphasis on melody and harmony. Of course, underground purists quickly accused them of selling out.

"So who exactly have we sold out to?" Mackintosh ponders. "It's the opposite if anything. That's why I find it quite amusing when some of the press say we've sold out because

we have no idea who is buying this record or who is going to buy it. We certainly don't want to alienate our fan base, but we also don't wanna walk around forever playing the same stuff just to keep them."

In view of album sales (*Draconian Times* netted them their first gold record), indeed the opposite can be said. In the hands of a lesser band, *Draconian Times*'s follow-up would have been the *Draconian Tribune* quickly followed by the *Draconian Picayune*. Like they had six years before with *Gothic*, Paradise Lost made a bold leap, this time with *One Second*.

Because dance loops are layered thick throughout the album, comparisons to Depeche Mode or even Gary Numan are not unfounded. An even more obvious influence is the Sisters Of Mercy. *One Second* could very well be what the Sisters wanted to accomplish with their 1990 *Vision Thing* release. However, Paradise Lost have reworked the Sisters approach, gracefully matting the elegance of synth with the rapture of rock.

"All The Sisters Of Mercy references and things — they are what we remembered what was good and what excited us about that band," Mackintosh says. "But as far as they go, I probably haven't even listened to them for maybe three or four years. . . . It's not that we listened to it and thought, 'What can we take out of their song book now?'"

The simple fact that *One Second* even warrants Sisters of Mercy comparisons should ruffle some feathers. Wuss-out and wimp-out claims have already surfaced in such high-profile metal magazines as *Metal Maniacs* and *Terrorizer*.

"We've heard [people saying] it's not heavy enough and things like that," Mackintosh says. "It's just not a huge guitar-oriented album."

However, Mackintosh adds, you don't necessarily need guitar to be heavy. "But people don't always seem to understand that. So we tell them, 'Machine Head have a new album out. Go buy that.'

"In Europe, we've really had the press shocked," Mackintosh continues. "They think maybe our fans won't like it. I don't know. I think that's kind of selling our fans short a little bit. We give our fans more credit than the press does."

Holmes adds: "We don't expect anything ever in general, even though we do have a secret optimism about things. Ultimately though, if you don't expect anything, you're never disappointed."

If Holmes and Mackintosh think they've been having trouble converting British ears to the sound of *One Second*, just wait until they cross the Atlantic. Success has completely eluded Paradise Lost in America to this point — and the band is hardly to blame. Bad luck with record labels, typified by the unbelievable firing of Relativity's rock department the day of *Draconian Times*'s American release, coupled with a brief but humbling tour of the United States more than three years ago, has left the group a bit cynical when it comes to thoughts of an American breakthrough. But if they ever intend to break the piggy bank in the States, *One Second* could be the album that does it.

"It would be nice," Mackintosh agrees. "But we're not counting on it."

Holmes is equally cautious.

"There's all these contributing factors [to success in America]," he says. "It helps if you're highly attractive in America . . . which leaves us fucked, because there are no [Bush singer] Gavin Rossdales in this band. You have to look good. You have to act like a game show host. I don't know. We've all got lovely new haircuts though, so maybe we could be marketed to Bush fans."

But perhaps, with a little perseverance, they will win over American audiences — it worked with the teary-eyed German fan, Holmes says.

"I actually convinced him that it was a good album by the end of the conversation," he says. "He was a pretty fickle nut, I think." **J**

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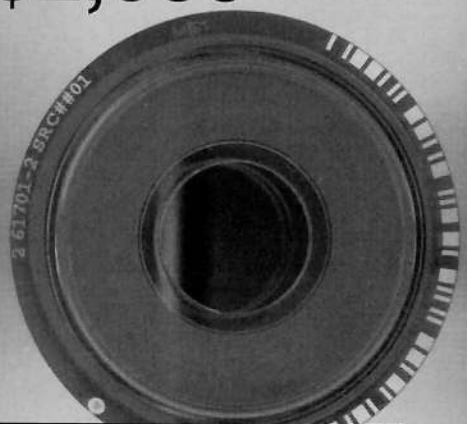

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THE EXORCISTER CRISIS

Hardcore & Catharsis

BY ALEX S. JOHNSON

PHOTOS BY DEBBIE POCCIA

Karyn Crisis has the face of a pre-Raphaelite angel and a voice that arcs the space between heaven and hell.

As Gia Chuan Wang's growling bass knits with Fred Bittner's rock-steady percussion beneath the brooding melody of Afzaal Nasiruddeen's guitar, Karyn sits stock-still, her back to the audience. Power chords burst like bullets and she rises, a serpent uncurling strength, and lets loose a primal wail.

Waist-long blond dredlocks whipping the air around her, Karyn spins the stage like a dervish on a search-and-destroy mission, filling the space of Hollywood's Troubadour nightclub with an aura much larger than what seems possible from her small-boned, 5-foot-1 frame. As she stamps back and forth, her voice takes perilous leaps from pretty operatic soprano to a raw, throat-scraping scream worthy of the demon Evil

Henrietta in *Evil Dead II*. In bare feet, a black tank top and jeans cut off at the knee, with ankles and shoulders awash with tattoos, Karyn blurs into an entity that's not quite male, not quite female — maybe not even human. You just know it's damn fierce.

As she scans the crowd, a male voice shouts out, "Sweet thing!" Sweet she can be, but Karyn also has a lethal mind and is well equipped for the art of psychic warfare. From the straightforward hardcore of Crisis' debut album *8 Convulsions* (Too Damn Hype, 1995) through the increasingly thick, multi-layered sound of its follow-up, *Deathshead Extermination* (Metal Blade, 1996), and the most recent *The Hollowing* (Metal Blade, 1997), Karyn's lyrics and the band's sound have traced a thematic passage of heroic survival in the teeth of all adversity. Even in the bleakest moments in *The Hollowing,* as Karyn seems to shout from some personal abyss so profound it threatens to eclipse all hope, it's the voice of someone who can be beaten but never vanquished — and heaven help those who threaten her when she recoups her powers!

As well as lending her vocal prowess to Crisis, Karyn has created the artwork for all three albums, which also grace the band's T-shirts and posters. She even commands her own concession stand at concerts, at which time the dagger-voiced sprite of stage resolves into a sweet, outgoing woman with a smile that could melt titanium. As much as New York's speed and grit have left their mark on her, there's still something oddly wholesome about this Indiana-born-and-raised artist. Talking with Karyn after the show, I have to tell her, even if it smacks of gushing: "You squeeze every ounce of emotion from a performance. That was incredible."

She replies, "That's the whole idea." Turning personal therapy and soul-catharsis into a psychodrama that releases the whole audience along the way — that's the Crisis experience.

While at one time Karyn worried about the contradiction between her dark, intense onstage persona and the sunny vivacity she shows greeting fans, doing interviews and selling band products, she soon found that resolution coming on cue when the music hit. "I used to think, OK, I have to be isolated and get into the mindset. But now I don't really do that anymore. I relax

and I know that . . . it's kind of like being plugged into an electric socket. When the music hits, it does automatically, even if I'm in the best of moods."

As a graphic artist as well as musician, Karyn speaks of sound in visual terms, as when she explains her early interest in the Cocteau Twins. "I really liked her [singer Elizabeth Fraser's] vocals. It was kind of an ethereal texture; it wasn't really singing a song per se, but was more like an instrument."

Before meeting Crisis guitarist Nasiruddeen through a mutual friend, Karyn had started to make her own music on a home four-track. "It was just vocals and guitar, not that many words, other than using them for vowel sounds. I was always looking for something harder though."

Karyn found inspiration for that hard side in the vocals of German industrial noise group Einstürzende Neubauten. "[Neubauten singer] Blixa really does some amazing things with his voice, and that's where I first heard a scream used as a texture. As I got older and older, I decided I would try to use that scream. It was a very powerful thing, and I just was in love with the very gray ambience and the very, very violent, evil sound. I felt they were both very powerful emotionally, and for some reason those came to be the two textures I used the most."

When Karyn met Nasiruddeen through her roommate, band photographer Richard Hobbs, she had heard a rehearsal tape of some of the songs that would become *8 Convulsion*. "I said, 'Wow, this is what I've really been looking for.' In my vocabulary of metal, which was like Judas Priest or Yngvie Malmsteen, I didn't know the whole run of what was out there in the world — from Helmet to Pantera to Cradle of Filth. I [couldn't] believe that someone would give me the chance to do this, because he [Nasiruddeen] said they were looking for a female singer."

Nasiruddeen and original Crisis drummer Fred Waring had a band called Stalwart, which broke up when the two voiced their desire for a female lead vocal, and their bass player seceded. They brought in bassist Wang, with whom Waring was in a Euro-metal side band, and when Karyn entered the picture, the mesh was perfect.

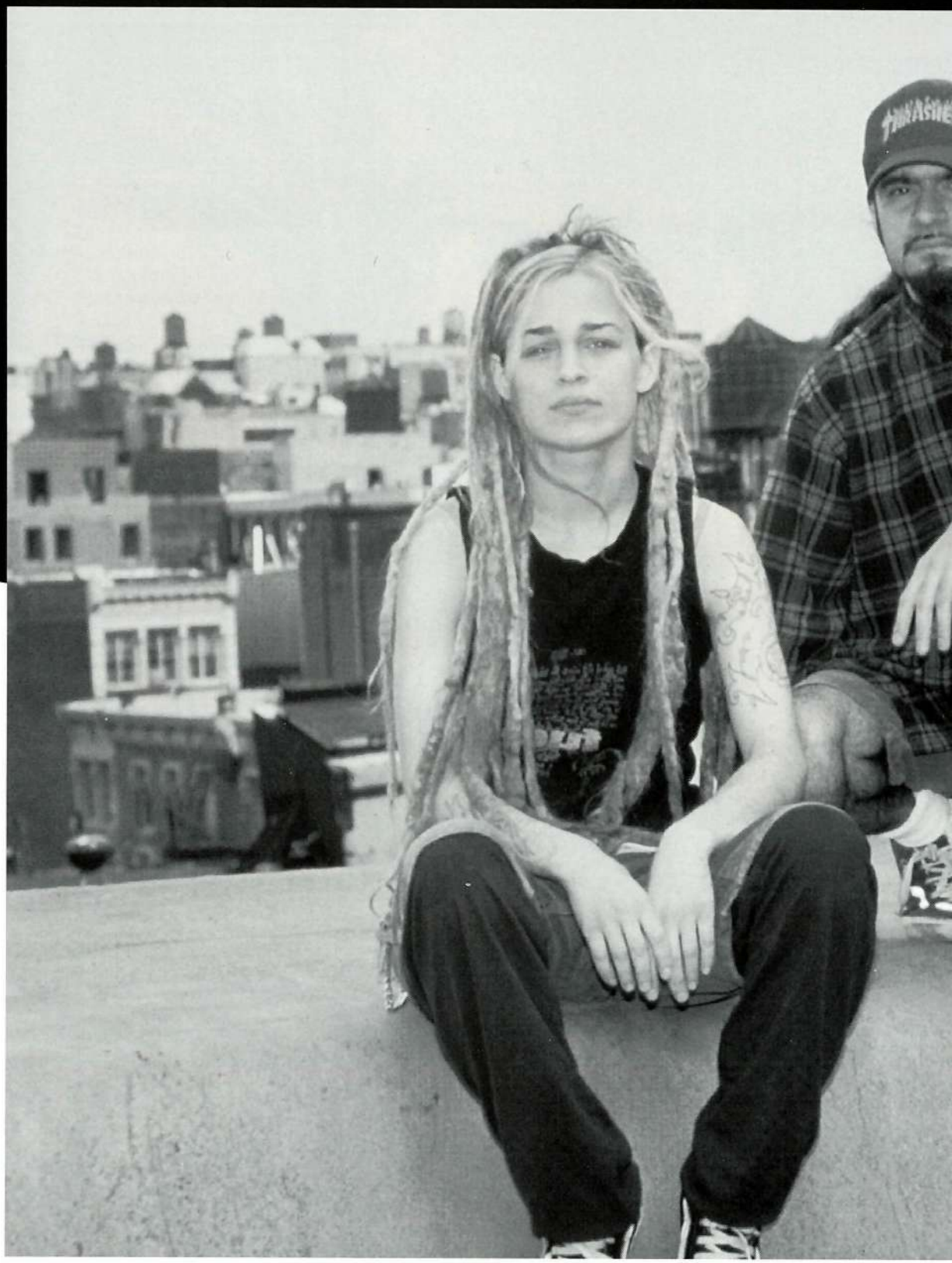
"The lyrics to the song 'Join Me' just popped into my head around one in the morning after I got the tape. And I guess this singing style was a metamorphosis from singing texturally, from melody to the screaming, and putting words into it. I didn't know if I could pull it off. I'd never sang words that way. I asked them to play that song before we jammed or anything, in case I couldn't pull it off and made a fool out of myself. It ended up working out really well, and it was an energetic burst, and from there, it just kept going."

Comparing *The Hollowing*'s sonic palette to that of *Deathshead Extermination*, Karyn says the second album is "much more abrasive. It's kind of like a warring album. It's very, very harsh. With this one, it's a lot more melodic; it's a smoother combination between all of those things that we do, tempos and changes."

Taking its title from Hitler's genocidal march through Poland, *Deathshead Extermination* reflects Crisis's struggle for survival in the New York hardcore scene, dogged with the perception that the band was a kind of flash-in-the-pan novelty.

"I think at that point we felt like we were battling to prove ourselves," she says. "I know especially after the first album, [people were saying] 'Oh, there's just this gimmick with this girl who jumps around on stage. She'll never be able to sing that way for long.' Even back at that time when we were just on the [Metal Blade] label, and the guy who signed us left. We weren't sure how much they liked us, so we were having to fight for a lot of things at that point too. So we were very much trying to keep ourselves from being exterminated in some ways."

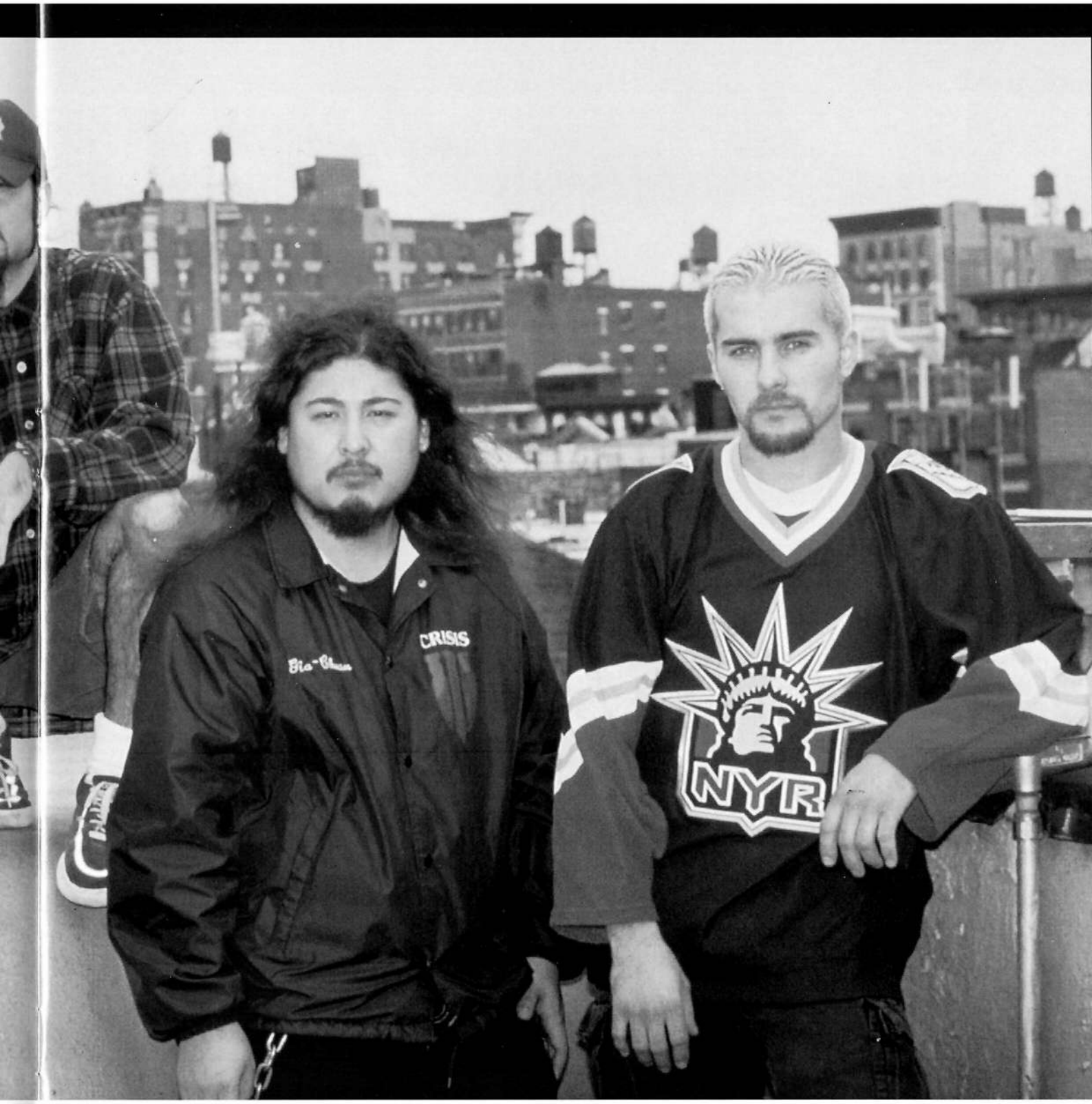
Unlike the first two albums, Karyn had to create the artwork for *The Hollowing* before the



lyrics, due to label scheduling. As a result, she wound up tossing aside the lyrics she'd been toying with. "The poem on back of it [the album] says, 'On beaches of bone/the siren sings.' I started thinking about the whole thing, about the siren calling you out to sea, whatever that may be, your dream, temptation, whatever the siren song is, and I realized that with the album, what I wanted to do with the artwork and somehow lyrically was to finally face some of the demons from my childhood or the past that I wanted to get rid of."

The sad figure who appears on *The Hollowing*'s cover, which has charcoal smudges for eyes and a numbed slit for a mouth, represents the character Karyn created to package and expunge her hurt. "I made this little guy who is, in a sense, hollowing one's self. He cut out his heart, because it wasn't really working anywhere. He puts himself in a coffin because he's become a ghost, and he mails himself out to sea."

"In the past," says Karyn, "I wrote about things in my own mind, whether they be commentaries on social conditioning, or paranoia and fear. I tended to write them like little stories, through the character's eyes. And with this album I wanted to just write something, my own voice, unmasked, and it was kind of difficult to write about some of the things I write about. We recorded the drums and bass in New York and went down to New Orleans to do everything else. While everybody else was partying, I shut



myself off and struggled to get these things out and capture them songwise, arrange the lyrics. It was very rough, and I got kind of depressed. I thought I was ruining the album for a while. I thought it was too bland, for me."

Just as Crisis have come to embrace increasing complexity in their music, Karyn's artwork for the band has progressed from the comic-book warrior angel of *8 Convulsions,* a gender-blended primal screamer, through the double-exposed, painted-over photo negatives on *Deathshead* and the multimedia construction of *The Hollowing*. "The artwork was very dark anyway. So it just got progressively darker," she says with a laugh.

The Crisis logo — three intertwined daggers — encapsulates the themes and issues of this band as well as anything. "A knife is a very primal symbol," Karyn says. "When I deal with emotions, or I deal with lyrics, my primal instincts come out; you see the rage side of it, and I always just embrace the knife. It's sharp and jagged, and so is our music."

A quote on the back of *8 Convulsions* reads: "Crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born. In this interregnum, a variety of morbid symptoms appear." As Karyn explains it, "Our music kind of doesn't fit in anywhere. We're a melding of nationalities and gender, and so in this time of peace, or before the war and after the war, there are these morbid symptoms, which is like our music." J

TAKI

Max Cavalera (at right, with the long dreads) poses with his new band, Soulfly: standing beside him, guitarist Jackson Bandeira; standing with no shirt, bassist Marcello D. Rapp; and, sitting, drummer Roy "Rata" Mayorga.

NG SOULFLY TO THE MAX

PHOTOS BY GLEN LaFERMAN/ROADRUNNER

Ex-Sepultura frontman Max Cavalera is revived with depth & diversity

By ARY NUSSBAUM

Forced to choose between his woman and the band that has defined his life, Max Cavalera, the erstwhile vocalist and guitarist of Sepultura, didn't just side with his wife, Gloria, the band's manager at the time of the split. He contends musical integrity played a key role in his decision as well.

Resurfacing as the momentum behind his new project, Soulfly, Cavalera, in the midst of an extensive publicity tour taking him to four continents, calls from a cell phone in Amsterdam while being chauffeured around the city in an Alfa Romeo.

Fourteen months after the highly publicized break-up, Cavalera is still unsure how to explain the turn of events. The coup against him and his wife, he says, was plotted by Sepultura hanger-ons who wanted to see

the other members — his brother, Igor, Andreas Kisser and Paulo Jr. — take more control of the music and hire a more conventional manager "with an office in the middle of L.A."

Forthright in his assessment of the break-up, he says, "The group started being less about the four of us and more about the people around [us]. The influence of thinking about other stuff. I believe these people were willing to destroy the band, wanted the band to split up or at least get rid of me and Gloria.

"We [Gloria and I] always tried to keep Sepultura not like Metallica, more real," he stresses, adding, "We'd understand things like integrity, family, the real tribal feelings. The other people could not understand it and kept fucking around, fighting that. The best thing was for me to leave. There's no point in staying in a band that's really successful if you're really miserable."

With his new band, he says, "I have fun with the guys, I do what I want, and the integrity's all there. I don't have to worry about my integrity as far as the music I make."

Although he had the option of staying with the decade-old group, Cavalera says it was conditional on him complying "with their policies and shit."

"We were playing in England [in Dec. '96] and, after the show, they fired Gloria, which was really brutal after all the years she put into the band. After that I said, 'I don't think I'm staying. I'm gonna think about it for a while, but I think you guys made a big mistake, and I don't think I'm gonna stay with you guys.'"

Coming on the heels of his stepson Dana Wells' still-unsolved murder, the Sao Palo, Brazil, native recalls a painful period in the couple's lives. "Dana's death was shocking for everybody — mainly for Gloria, his mother. It was really hard for her cope with, and the band didn't help by firing her. For me, it was better to do something new and keep supporting Gloria, because she was already in a great deal of pain. She needed support from friends."

Incredibly, however, Cavalera denies having any animosity toward his ex-mates. "I don't want to be like that. It's already been a year, and I've moved onto something new. I hope to fix at least the friendship and level of respect. I can't lie to you — some of those times were really the best times of my life. If I can at least maintain the level of respect for each other, that's good enough for me."

Though he doesn't rule out reuniting with Sepultura, he states Soulfly is the sole agenda for now. And even if Sepultura called him and begged for him to come back, a prospect he characterizes as unrealistic, Cavalera insists he wouldn't go. "I would say, 'I'm sorry, I can't do it, I already have a band.'"

Never one to dwell on the negative, he says Soulfly, named in memory of his murdered stepson Dana, has served as a catharsis for his tumultuous personal life, flushing out the toxins he developed as a result of the turbulence his career was experiencing. "Instead of sitting home and being bummed out," Cavalera says, he formed Soulfly with New York slickster Roy Mayorga (formerly of Nausea and Thorn) on drums and long-time Sepultura roadie Marcello Rapp on bass.

His second guitarist, Lucio, a.k.a. Jackson Bandeira, is seeking refuge from the defunct Brazilian thrash group Chico Science. With the ensemble in tow, Cavalera headed back to Malibu for an encore with producer Ross Robinson, who has worked with Korn and Sepultura.

Cavalera acknowledges being able to write music again as a euphoric triumph considering the trials he battled, and being written off by disbelieving skeptics. "Finally after a whole year of putting this together, being in the studio recording was a release. It was great," he recalls.

Contrasting his new band's playing style to his former one, he says, "Everyone has their own special thing. I think [the] Sepultura guys are really good musicians, but I think the three guys I'm playing with are real good musicians, too. They are just different. I think Marcello plays bass with more attitude than Paulo. He plays harder, grooves more. Lucio is a completely different guitar player than Andreas. He does less leads, more noises and more weird stuff with the wah-wah and freaked-out shit. Roy plays similar to Igor, but he tries to advance and mix other shit too. He can play fast and he's really into Brazilian percussion — I think more than a lot of Brazilian people."

When asked which group is more fun to play with, Cavalera hedges. "Right now the feeling of playing with them is the feeling I had with Sepultura before we started fighting and becoming all bullshit. I compare the feeling with Soulfly right now with the feeling I had with Sepultura when everybody was getting along and when we were growing up. It's a good feeling."

Another reason for his current state of ebullience is "everybody's new and excited," he says. "A lot of the guys never played for more than a thousand people and they know with Soulfly they're gonna play in front of a lot of people. There's real fire in the air, just ready to fuck shit up."

Robinson, producer of *Roots* (Roadrunner, 1996), the last Sepultura album, and Cavalera apparently get along famously. "It's a friendship and a really strong relationship as far as knowing what both of us want. We know exactly what kind of sound and what kind of vibe we want," says Cavalera of the collaboration. The decision to team with Robinson was

not a hard one he says, primarily because it was "a really delicate moment to make a decision, like mak[ing] an album with somebody else. Maybe in the future I'll decide to work with other people, but right now I decided to work with people I know already."

Sporting appearances by "cool guys in bands that I like," Soulfly features guests the likes of Fear Factory (sans Ray Herrera), DJ Lethal (ex-H.O.P.) of Limp Bizkit, the Deftones, Chino Moreno, Eric Bobito from Cypress Hill, Benjii Webb of Dub War and even Beastie Boy-producer Mario Culdato, who weighs in to lend to the heavily textured sound.

Soulfly's flammable ingredients hold the potential to set heavy music in a new state of distress and single-handedly create a new subgenre, anarchic metal, boldly defying the standard mores. Merging influences such as reggae, hip-hop, Brazilian percussion, wicked tribal chants and Middle Eastern melody with bludgeoning riffs Inquisition honcho Tomas de Torquemada would be envious of, the group's depth is present on every track.

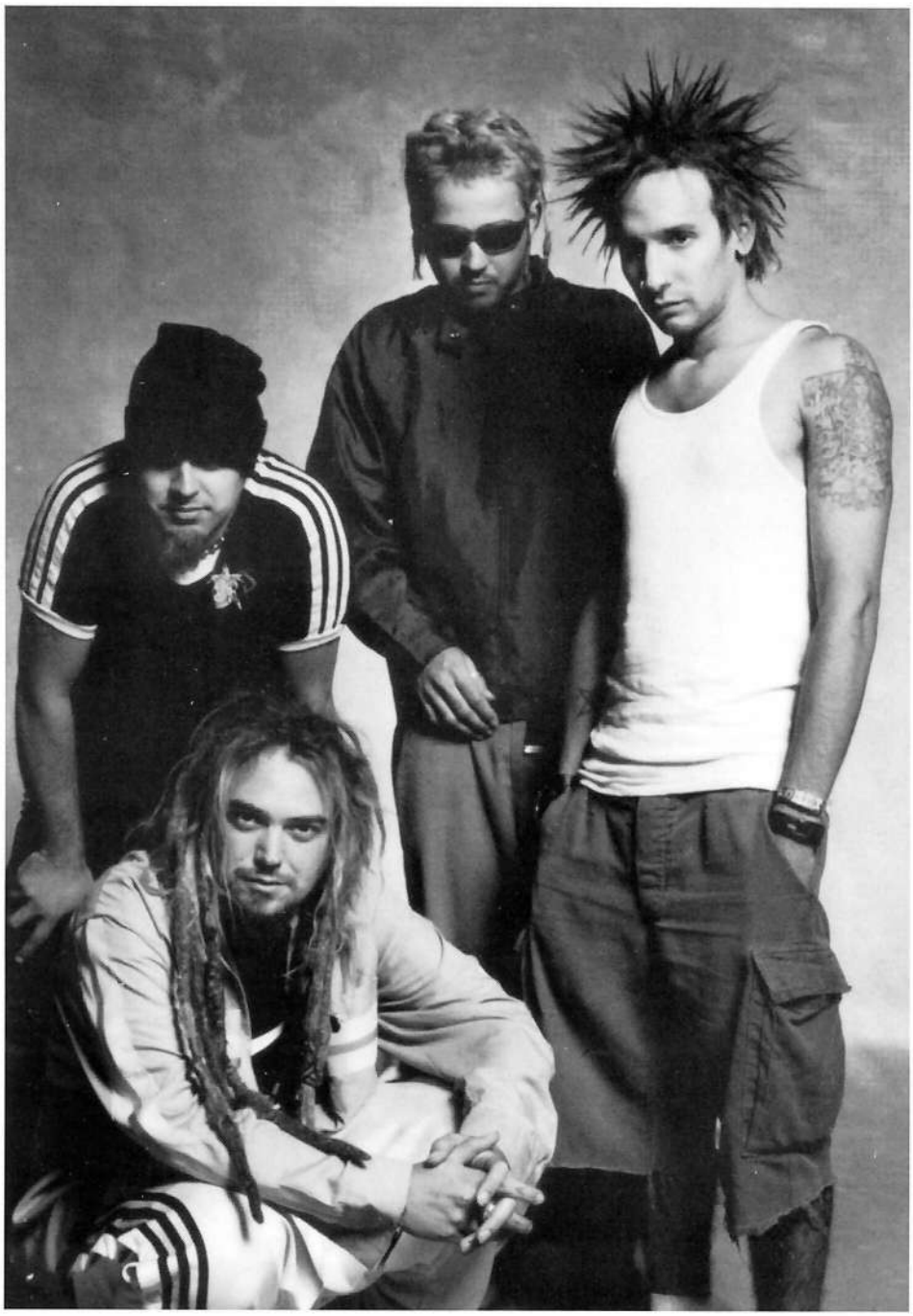
Beginning with the throbbing cut "Eye for an Eye," the specter of influences is apparent with the inclusion of a bodacious Middle Eastern vibe sure to take the listener to *Arabian Nights*. That was no coincidence, Cavalera explains, taking into account the origins of "Eye for an Eye" (think Biblical). He attributes the discovery of Middle Eastern music to a Moroccan fan who sent him a tape of his country's music.

"I kept the tape," he recounts, "and when I came to do the album I thought it would be cool to put a little of the tape into the song. I wrote back to the kid saying I used some of that tape, and he was really stoked."

The blunted, off-the-hook jams of "No Hope = No Fear," the hip-hop influenced "Bleed" and the detuned tribal funk of "Umababaruma" all serve as highlights in the all-out display of diverse aggression. And the kickin' tracks with Webb and Cavalera sharing the mic are most impressive.

Planning to tour with the percussion instruments in tow, Soulfly has been keeping busy with other plans including shooting a few videos and playing the 1998 traveling OzzFest.

Cavalera explains the heavy accent on tribal and Brazilian percussion as an evolution of sorts since he started listening to the rock melting music of Neurosis. After having Dave Edwardson of Neurosis play bass for a side project of his, Nailbomb, he says, "I got into all the stuff like them and Tribes of Neurot and way-out-there tribal shit. I really dig them, because they don't give a fuck. They just do it because they want to do it."



Known to write a few songs dealing with socio-political issues, Cavalera says he named "Quilombo" after a Brazilian slave refugee camp of 300 years ago. "At one point they had 30,000 slaves living there," he says. "They were revolting against the Portuguese masters and slavery." Displaying a seldomly revealed heightened awareness of history, Cavalera compares the Brazilian slaves to the African Zulus, who had revolted against their English masters.

The self-taught historian has enthusiastically researched Brazilian culture because he was driven "to find out where the culture came from, where the drums came from. A lot of it — maybe 70 percent of it — came from Africa. It's pretty exciting to find out so many years later what our culture is really based on."

Again in the driver's seat, Cavalera has again turned sharply off the road of convention, primarily because he wanted to do something experimental for a long time. "*Roots* was the first major step in that type of thing but, Soulfly took it beyond."

During its 10 years with Cavalera on board, Sepultura was influential to many metal bands. However, Cavalera says his greatest contributions to hard music may be Soulfly and the stance he took, sacrificing his Sepultura prominence for principles.

"The main point on Soulfly is that I'm with a different group, but the spirit is the same I had with Sepultura," Cavalera says. "Even musically, the people are gonna realize how much I wrote for Sepultura — and took with me when I left." J

Megadeth's Dave Musta

Older, wiser and still thrashing it out

Megadeth frontman Dave Mustaine has always had something to prove.

In the early '80s, when hair metal had its fist clenched tightly around the American hard rock scene, Mustaine and his mates — Lars Ulrich, James Hetfield and the late Cliff Burton — unsheathed a double-edged sword called speed metal upon the masses. Influenced by everything from Diamond Head and Budgie to the Sex Pistols and the Misfits, this new style crafted with their band Metallica brewed up breakneck rhythms and pounding beats with virtuoso yet no-frills guitar work.

In what is by now legendary lore to metalheads, Mustaine was booted from the San Francisco Bay-area band on the eve of recording their seminal debut. Even though the group had fondly referred to themselves as "Alcoholica," Mustaine ironically owed his departure to his drinking problem and feisty attitude.

Undaunted, Mustaine formed his own outfit, Megadeth, even taking a song or two with him. (Metallica's "The Four Horsemen" and Megadeth's "Mechanix," both on their respective debut albums, are virtually the same song.) A bitter feud ensued, and the media latched on to it. Reports of the feud continue, despite the fact that Mustaine has apologized to the band in person for his part in it.

During the following years, Megadeth produced some of their most listened-to work — *Killing is My Business . . . and Business Is Good* (1985), the classic *Peace Sells . . . but Who's Buying?* (1986) and *So Far, So Good . . . So What?* (1988). Along with Metallica, Anthrax and Slayer, they led the thrash-metal pack, bringing innovation to the genre with each release.

However, band members never stayed around for a long time, and the line-up never solidified until about 1990 — when *Rust in Peace* was released — with bassist David Ellefson (the only consistent cohort of Mustaine's), guitarist Marty Friedman and drummer Nick Menza. A masterpiece of dueling guitar posturing, heavy groove and showmanship, *Rust in Peace* was a peak for the self-described "state-of-the-art speed metal band."

One has to wonder what has kept the Mustaine-Ellefson-Friedman-Menza line-up together for so long. Even Mustaine himself says he's unsure.

"I don't know. I really don't know," he says bluntly. "I guess [it's] the desire to play in a great band and to tolerate all of the trials and tribulations of the road. Because it gets taxing. I saw something Bruce Dickinson [of Iron Maiden] said, that he was taking medicine and he was sick, and that he would rather cancel the shows than do a nonsense show. And I thought to myself, you know, whatever happened to 'The show must go on'?"

However, by the time the line-up solidified, drug and alcohol abuse within the band had already taken its toll. Mustaine sought help and has since become clean and sober.

Mustaine, who had previously come off as full-of-himself in the press, also shifted his biting attitude. With *Countdown to Extinction* (1992), the band's commercial breakthrough (peaking at Number 2 on the *Billboard* charts), he adjusted his lyrical focus to more personal instead of political topics. (He had even covered a Democratic National Convention for MTV a few years back.)

"It's kind of hard to talk to someone who doesn't care about voting, about changing the face of the government of this country, because if you're not involved, it doesn't matter," Mustaine says. "We're living in a generation of ignorance and apathy, and most people are more concerned about how they look than what they actually are. For me, I think the one thing that is undeniable is emotions. We all have them no matter whether we fake it or not. We all go through that."

In 1994, two years after *Countdown to Extinction* was released, came the radio-friendly *Youthanasia*. While it became another financial success, many fans saw it as the ultimate wimp out.

Possibly fearing that his credibility (which Mustaine says "is first and foremost") was at stake, Mustaine came out with an album in 1997 bent on silencing his critics. Though most of the songs on *Cryptic Writings* lean toward the hook-laden, radio-oriented direction Megadeth have been heading, songs like the "Motorbreath"-reminiscent "FFF" and "The Disintegrators" are obvious nods to their hardcore audience.

The question arises: was *Youthanasia*, in retrospect, maybe too soft?

Not at all, says Mustaine: "I think *Youthanasia* was a vital step in the direction that we were going. Because of the fact that the record industry, the music industry and radio and media had turned itself inside-out chasing the next Nirvana, I don't think they received *Youthanasia* as well as the rest of the world did."

Even though Mustaine blames the alternative rock scene for the record's lack of

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PHOTO BY DEBBIE POCCIA/JUGGERNAUT

BY RYAN DOWNEY

success, he says he doesn't dislike the scene. "Because they were trying to do something new," he says. "As I said in 'Peace Sells': 'If there's a new way, I'll be the first in line, but it better work this time.'"

In fact, Mustaine says, Megadeth were a bit ahead of the electronic remix bandwagon of late when they had Trent Reznor remix "Symphony of Destruction" several years ago. Also, of the three remixes floating around of Megadeth's latest single, "Almost Honest," one is done by industrialists KMFDM.

Meanwhile, *Cryptic Writings* recently went gold. "It feels pretty good," Mustaine says. "People said it wasn't going to sell more than 200,000-300,000. For people who doubted us, I'm going to pray that they go to heaven — tonight," he says laughing.

Another change Megadeth's music has undergone on the last couple of records is that they have become decidedly more vocal-hook oriented as opposed to riff-centered. Mustaine explained: "I'm not so afraid to sing anymore. Before, I thought that, if I'm a warbly-type singer, people are gonna get turned off. I finally had to come the conclusion that — you know what? As a rhythm and lead guitar player myself, I can't get any better. The same could be said for Marty, Nick and David. We're all at the very, very, very top of our field. I've created a guitar style that will be here for the rest of time. Marty Friedman is a guitar wunderkind. David Ellefson is a really solid bassist and Nick Menza is a dynamo. So for me to look at all those things, I had to ask myself, 'What is the missing element right now?' And it was obvious: It was my singing."

Thus, with confidence, Mustaine, who says he's inspired from a wide range of singers — everyone from Sting to Neil Finn of label-mates Crowded House — says: "When I think of the rock scene, the three most readily identifiable voices that you hear in rock and roll are me, Axl [Rose] and James [Hetfield]."

As Mustaine's confidence has increased, so has his spirituality, he says.

"Last night I could barely speak before I went on, and . . . I just, I got quiet," he said. "I prayed for a while, I took my medicine and I just centered myself. And I went out there, and I sang my ass off. Then after I came back, my voice went back away. People talk about supernatural experiences and stuff like that, and I'm not really sure how most people will take what I'm saying, but, being able to quiet myself and get in touch with things that are helping me with my life today has given me the power to go out there when I can't sing normally."

A father of a baby girl — daughter Electra Nicole was born in January — and a young son, Justis, Mustaine is also health conscious and has even been interviewed by *Men's Health* magazine.

His biggest health kick, he said, is martial arts, which he has practiced since he was 12. In fact, the April issue of *Inside Karate* features Mustaine on the cover with the quote "How Martial Arts Saved My Life."

Mustaine's attitude toward martial arts sounds similar to that which he might have had toward drinking and drugs before he went through rehab. "It's all about tranquillity. When I come home after a good workout, I mean, sure, I'll be beat up really bad, but it's like I've been put on sedatives or something. It's just the most amazing feeling."

Now he looks at the drug scene and jokes. "It's so '80s, man. It's like, you do cocaine and your dick disappears, and you have to stick your thumb up your ass to get it to pop back out. Who wants to do stuff like that? It makes you really, really seductive when it comes to picking up on chicks — sure, they love to snort coke — but you take your pants off, and all you've got is a helmet and a tuft of hair."

Music journalists have picked up on Mustaine's maturity and have turned from painting his portrait as a loud-mouth, egotistical monarch to describing him as a serene family man.

"I think maybe the superlatives or the adjectives that they're using to describe me — I think what they were trying to describe was accurate, but the way that they described it was not."

If he were to paint his own portrait, the 36-year-old says he would construct it as such:

"Loud-mouth? No.

"Outspoken? Yes.

"Arrogant? No.

"Self-confident? Yes.

"Monarch? No.

"Director? Leader? Yes."

. . . And about being newly serene and a family man? "I was serene back then, he says. I just don't take shit from anybody. If you're on my side and you're working toward a common goal, that's great. If you're neutral and don't really care, that's cool. But if you're going against me, and you're trying to humiliate me or my friends or my family or my band, then be prepared for me to react. I'm not a violent person, but the one thing I won't tolerate is people coming into our den and trying to tell us how to live."

But that's not the only thing that rubs him the wrong way, he said. (Remember his "credibility" comment?)

Many bands, Mustaine says, failed to give Megadeth their due credit and respect as an influence.

"You know what's weird is watching how that whole scene betrayed us," he says of the '80s thrash scene. "They all got onto the 'other side' — if you know what I mean — without implicating anybody. We basically went out to war by ourselves with no reinforcements and no real friends. A couple of groups really, really stuck with us as far as their loyalty and not being caught into the pseudo-feud [between him and Metallica], which has been over for years — from my perspective. It's just really, really sad to see how everybody is in their own clique, and they don't really want to have anything to do with us. But now that the record is really kicking off, and it's helping bring heavy metal and hard rock back to the forefront, they're all coming back: 'Hi Dave. Yeah, I've been a fan for years.' Oh yeah? Nice talking to you, two-face.

"I see who they cite their influences as, too, and it's like . . . we aren't listed. I can see through people really, really well."

Mustaine credits Flotsam and Jetsam as one band who have stuck by them, and says he keeps track of people like Warrel Dane, currently of the band Nevermore and formerly of Seattle's Sanctuary, a band Mustaine helped nurture. "I keep track on everybody," he says.

"Everybody," however, doesn't include the former members of Megadeth. "I think it is probably better that way," he says. "Every once in awhile I'll see Chris Poland. Gar has been talking some negative stuff about his experiences with us — things that he believes that I did which never happened."

Former guitarist Jeff Young was also particularly vocal for a time, often using his short-lived column in *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* magazine as a soap box to throw mud at Mustaine, who says Young was "out of line."

In 1998, Megadeth is still free of tattoos and piercings, and, as of this writing has only undergone one major haircut. Mustaine assured that he and his mates can't be swayed by trends.

"Well, sure, we feel the pressure, but it's pretty much like a very gentle breeze," he said resolutely. "It's just really strange right now, the way people are going to such extremes to be individual instead of just setting an example and doing something constructive.

"I met some kids backstage the other day at one of our shows, and they said that they were in a band. I just looked at them. Their whole faces looked like they were on the losing end of a rivet-gun fight, and I said, 'Nice hair.' Because their whole heads were shaved except the fronts, And someone said, 'Oh yeah, their mom's a hair dresser,' and I said, 'For what?'

"I think part of the reason that people look the way they do nowadays is just for the attention — to be different. Yeah, sure, you look a lot different when you've got the whole fuckin' True Value store

stuck through your face. You know?" Mustaine laughs. "And when your head looks like you've inserted a bad tampon and gotten toxic shock syndrome. . . .

"Some people — it's [the pressure to conform is] like a millstone grinding them down. For us — we're totally in control of our destiny, because we've got professional management and the band is really close and we communicate really well."

That "professional management" — which he says he has "for the first time in my whole career" — is something Mustaine is extremely excited about now.

"The difference before between me and my former band used to be that they had the songs, we didn't; they had the management, we didn't," he said. "And I'm talking about the songs that are getting radio and MTV play. Because we've always been equally just as heavy. Now we've got the management, too. The only difference is the length of time we've had the management. We've definitely got the songs on this record.

"Just to give you a perspective on how old and incredible and how much history and success our management team has had, our manager, Mike Renault — his partner was the one who picked the 'Summertime Blues' or whatever single off Cream's album. . . . [Another person on our team] has worked with and helped write songs for Foreigner, Bad Company and Damn Yankees. Foreigner has sold 80 million records in the United States and the world, and 80 million records is a lot of records."

"Very rarely do you have a real songwriter within a band, as far as a successful band. Tons of little baby bands, that are basically pimples, write their own stuff and don't get any airplay. They don't get any record sales. . . . They think they're songwriters, but they're not. The bands that really do have songwriters in them are fortunate, and, if things do change for them for the better, hopefully they won't forget their roots."

And about Mustaine's own roots? "You can always move forward, but you always have to remember where you started," he said. "And I think that's why we included songs like 'FFF' and 'She-Wolf' and 'Vortex.' We don't disrespect our fans, we appreciate them very much, and we're really grateful for their support through all the years. Now, I know it's been almost embarrassing to be outwardly supportive of Megadeth when someone is standing in the room wearing a Metallica or a Pantera or a Slayer shirt, but I think that trend's changed. I think that right now a couple of those bands have disappeared, and their musical choices have changed to the point where people don't know what to expect anymore."

Mustaine — who recently collaborated with Lee Ving of Fear on the project MD.45 — has hinted at the possibility of he and Ellefson doing a project someday with two people from his former band, but he's not sure if it will ever happen. "I think that there's a lot of work ahead," he says. "I heard that both of those gentlemen had bagged on me and my group very seriously on a satellite broadcast they just did."

For now, though, he would just assume put all feuding behind him, he says. "The bottom line is—," he starts, then says, "You know what? I'm not saying stuff anymore, so who's keeping this thing going?"

Meanwhile, and now that Miller Freeman Books has published Ellefson's book *Making Music Your Business*, Mustaine says he has tossed around the prospect of writing his own book, but he thinks he's not ready for it just yet.

"If I was going to write a book," he said, "it would have to be so well-orchestrated that it wouldn't be just another coaster for someone's Budweiser. It would have to be a real book, with real backing and real stories. There would have to be no restriction on it. It would have to be able to be about all the sex and drugs and life and death and all that stuff. I'm just not ready to do that now." J

MEET THE NEW TRIBE

MAX CAVALERA, CO-FOUNDING MEMBER OF SEPULTURA, HAS A NEW BAND, A NEW ALBUM, A NEW TRIBE:

SOULFLY

"...SHOWCASES CAVALERA'S KNACK FOR INCORPORATING DYNAMICS INTO SONGWRITING...PERCUSSION INTO POWER...AND DRAMA INTO METAL." —METAL MANIACS

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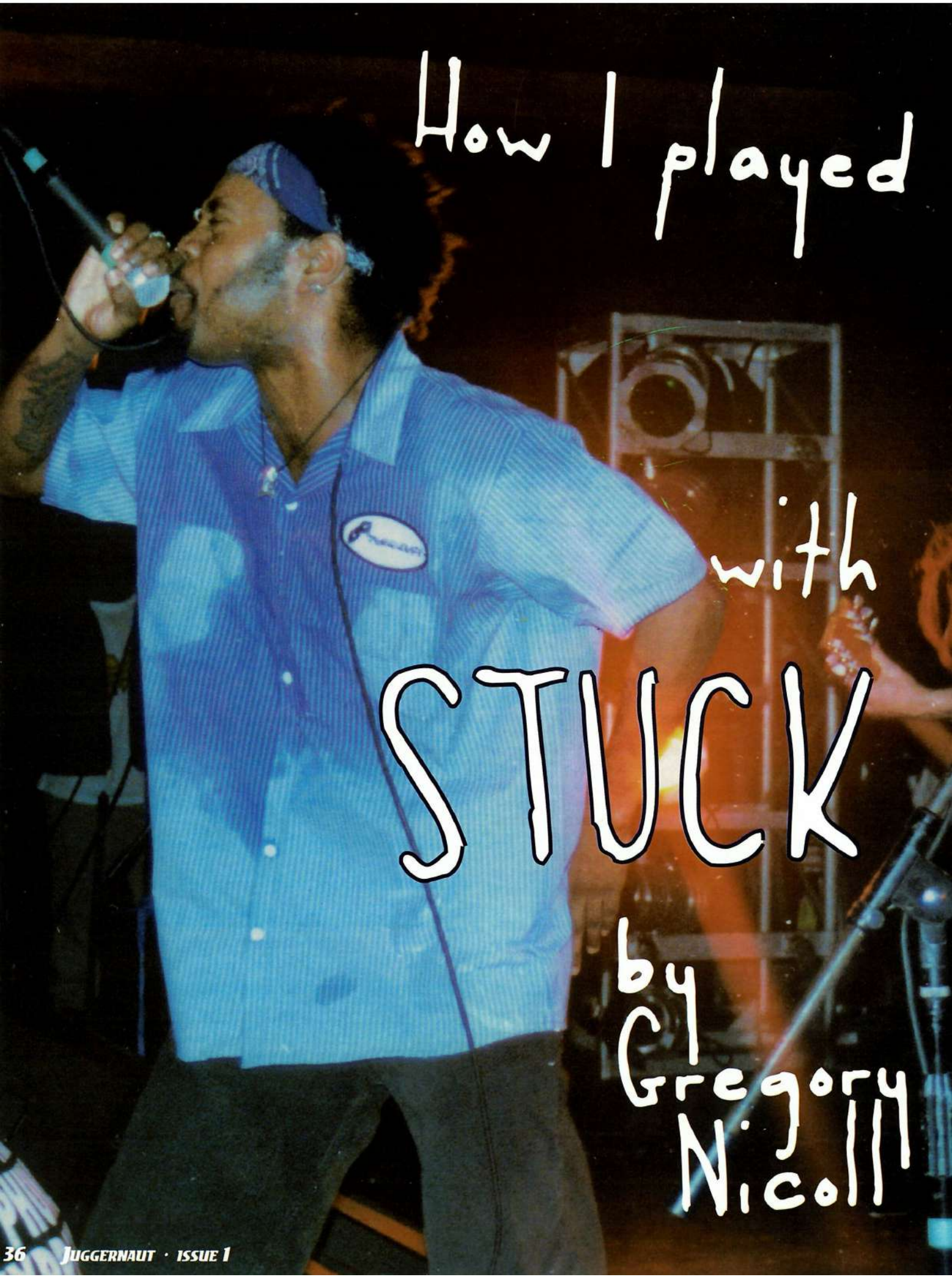


How I played with STUCK

by Gregory Nicoll

PHOTOS BY REBECCA O'BRIEN

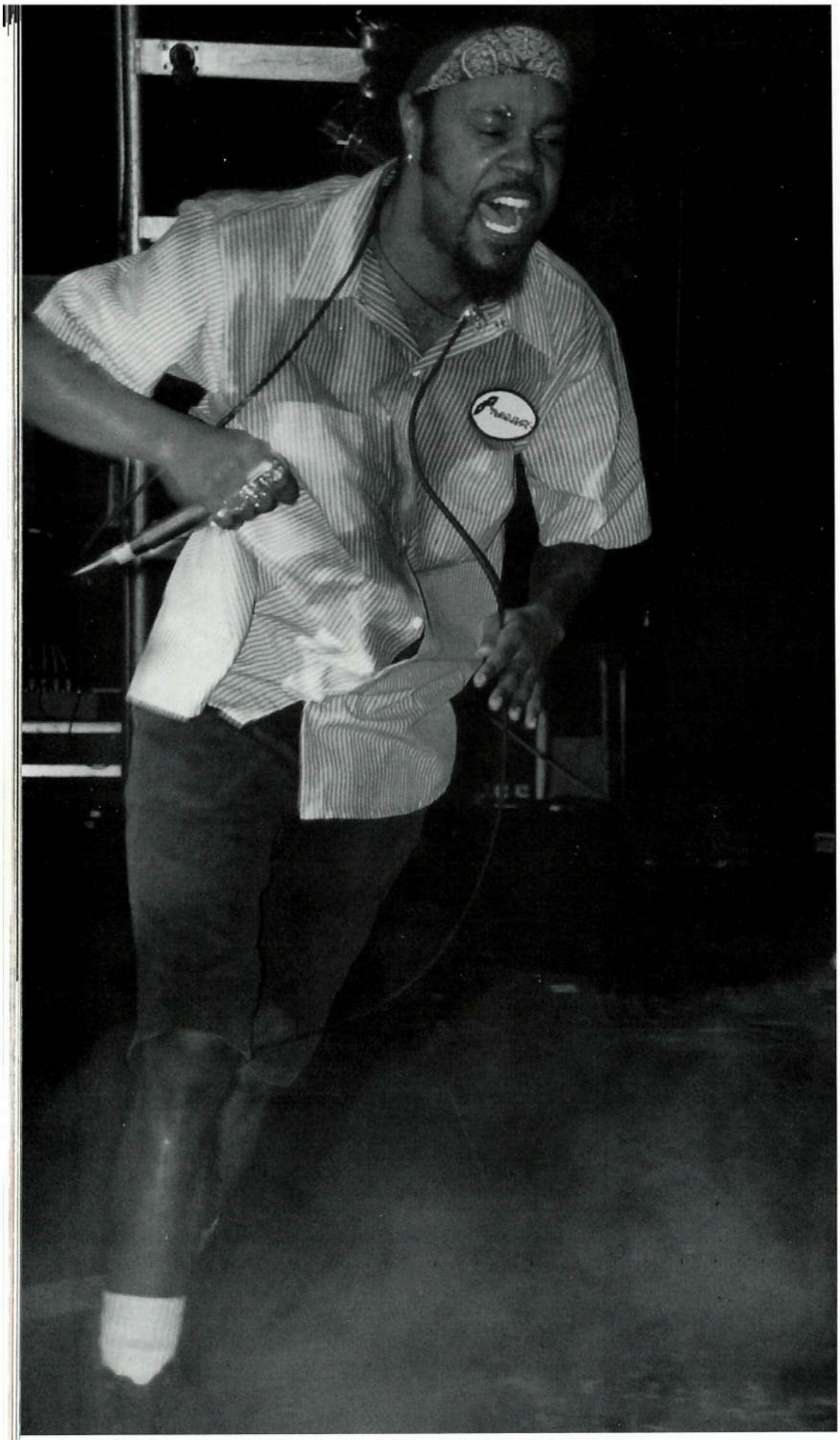
guest guitar

MOJO

In the beginning . . .

As a professional writer whose job is reporting on rock music in Atlanta, I have had many occasions to meet, interview and hang out with the members of — and the management team behind — the metallic wonder called Stuck Mojo.

However, in 1995 I was still new to the Atlanta scene — still looking for those elusive magic words that would open backstage doors and was still unacquainted with the power of the



Bonz charges on the stage during a Stuck Mojo show at the Masquerade in Atlanta.

Mojo magic. I was also a casual guitarist who — like many back-porch musicians — secretly fantasized about getting up and wringing chords under the bright lights in front of a cheering crowd of sweaty, happy fans. As luck would have it, Stuck Mojo made all that come true for me.

Here's how it happened.

October 1995 —

He's young and thin, with a passing resemblance to actor Samuel L. Jackson. As he stands outside the Wreck Room in the cool night air, he speaks in a friendly tone, casual but sincere. The dark skin of his hand is smooth and cool to my touch, his grip firm but not overpowering. His charm leaves a refreshing feeling that stays with me long after the pink plastic "Over 21" wrist tourniquet has deadened the sensation in my callused hand. The artist greeting me is known as Bonz (pronounced "bones"), and the staff at the club tell me he used to work here as a parking lot attendant.

Just a few a minutes later Bonz is rockin' up on the Wreck Room's stage. In fact, he's the superhuman running gears of what proves to be the roarin'est, rippin'est, most potently pulverizin' rhythm machine in town: Stuck Mojo.

I've never seen the Wreck Room so full. All the furniture's been cleared out, and other Atlanta bands who fancy themselves fortunate to draw fans by the dozen would turn green as Gumby if they saw the hundreds of young white rockers now crushing into this space, all drawn by the promise of a Mojo show. It's elbow-to-elbow and standing-room only, but once the music starts there is some relief — if only because at any given moment a huge percentage of these fans are airborne.

Stuck Mojo take the stage without special props, lights, or tricks. Guitarist Rich Ward and drummer Brent Payne look like typical white-boy Southern rockers who might jam on Skynyrd covers in their granpaw's cellar and dream of joining .38 Special; dread-locked bassist Dwayne Fowler resembles a refugee from a Caribbean hotel band. But looks have rarely been as deceiving as they are with this checkered unit. Stuck Mojo have mojo'ed up a perfect blend of hammer-hard rock and rip-snortin' rap.

As a white boy raised on Chuck

Berry, Little Richard and Hendrix, I'd never really made the leap-of-faith to rap, but Mojo's is a sound I can embrace eagerly, and with both arms. There's as much Black Sabbath here as there is Grandmaster Flash. Bonz absolutely commands the kids in the crowd, most of whom spend the entire show with their pale fists in the air, shouting along to every syllable of the songs from Mojo's debut CD, *Snappin' Necks*. Stage-diving and crowd-surfing at will, Bonz keeps the set thundering through tune after tune. His message varies between blasts, but he preaches as much responsibility as empowerment. (His damning indictment of drunk drivers on "Monkey Behind the Wheel," for instance, makes me kiss off my St. Pauli Girl for the rest of the night.) This all reaches a titanic crescendo with their signature song "Not Promised Tomorrow," for which Bonz fires up an audience roar-along during the chorus — as if guitarist Ward's own Satan-gargling-Drano backing vocals ("PROMISED! TOMORROW!") — weren't tower-toppling enough on their own.

There's something cosmic at work in this room tonight, and I feel a ripple of the same shock waves sent by other mighty black-meets-white bands of earlier eras, from the Jimi Hendrix Experience to Sly and the Family Stone, to Prince and the Revolution. My fist clenches, and my arm rises with its muscles flexing powerfully. Deep down inside, I feel a promise for tomorrow.

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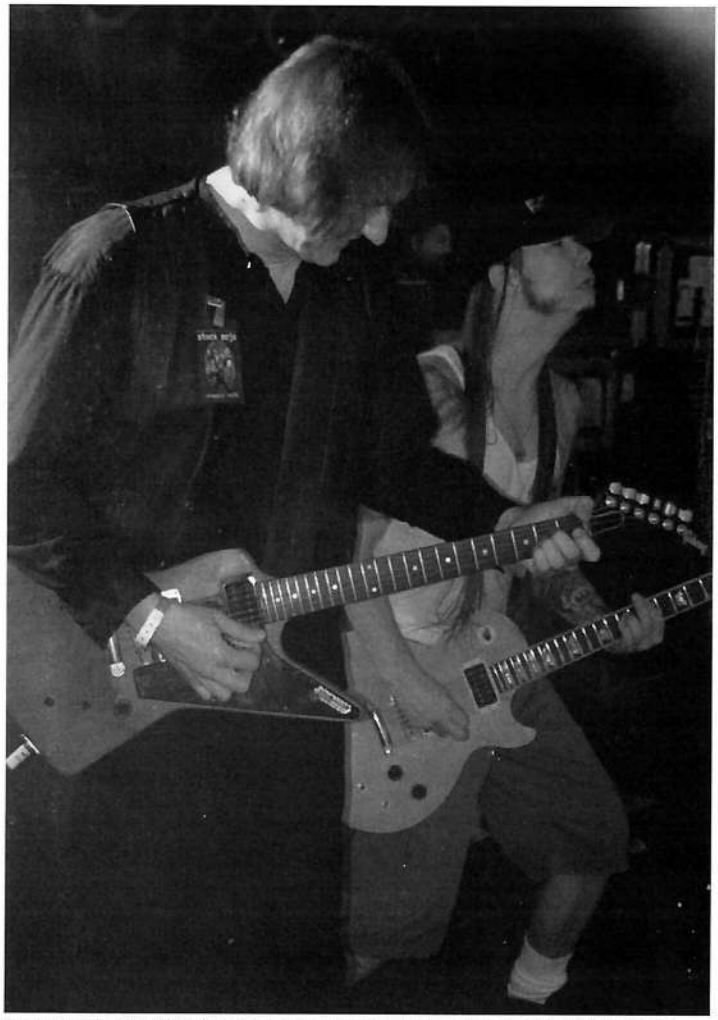
A few weeks later, a message comes from Mojo-manager Mark Willis. Apparently the band is quite impressed by the write-up I gave their Wreck Room gig in the local press, and they've invited me to jam with them during their upcoming Thanksgiving Day show at The Masquerade. The song will be their encore, a cover of Black Sabbath's "Sweet Leaf." They'll be expecting me for a soundcheck around 5 p.m.

I put in a quick call to a longtime guitarist buddy, Todd Mack of a folk-rock act called the Griswolds, and he invites me over for a quick guitar lesson, teaching me the basic "Sweet Leaf" riff. For next few weeks I practice it over and over on my '66 Mosrite guitar, playing along with the Sabbath record. By late November, I'm almost ready.



Gregory Nicoll (left) plays as guest guitarist next to Stuck Mojo's Rich Ward.

Thanksgiving Day '95

It's called Heaven, but at 5 p.m. on a rainy afternoon, the upstairs music hall of Atlanta's three-level Masquerade nightspot is a quiet, cold and empty place. Guys in black sweatshirts heft stencil-sided roadcases off of the freight elevator as a dude with a mop and a wheeled bucket slowly slops the hardwood boards. Others test stage lights, adding sudden splashes of red and green to the dark, earthy hues of Hollow Hall.

Aside from the eerie poltergeist-like bumping of cases on the elevator, the only sound is the slurp of the mop bucket. A bright yellow stage light blinks, reflecting on the moistened wooden floor like moonlight on a tidepool. The man in charge right now is Stuck Mojo's road crew chief, Sean (a.k.a. "Big Red"), a ponytailed task-master who's supervising a P.A. test with a CD of Seal's "A Prayer for the Dying," bouncing the sound from side to side, bass up and bass down, stopping abruptly.

Sean verifies show times with the sound & lights crew. "OK, I got Wicker Man at 9:30 to 10:10," he says authoritatively, "and Machine Head at 10:30; Stuck Mojo at 11:30."

I sigh. There are over five hours to go.

A stepladder rolls across the open floor like a medieval siege engine; a piker perched precariously atop it levels lights, swaps scrims and adjusts gels. More roadcases — these ones filled with tour merchandise (hats, T-shirts, pullovers) rumble back to the rear booth like runaway battering rams. The floor is clean now, the air above it smelling of lemon and ammonia. Somebody turns on a TV, and the sounds of a football game — a crowd cheering and an announcer's dry play-by-play — echo in the room.

A roadie asks, "Who's winnin', Mike?"

"Who'd you bet on?" comes the answer.

As a tech loudly tests guitar rigs, shaved-bald Mojo drummer Brent Payne shows up to whack the skins during a lengthy P.A. test. A thousand tiny adjustments are necessary to get it all set right, and I wonder silently if it takes as much preparation to launch a space shuttle. Mighty Mojo mouthpiece Bonz meanders in and glad-hands everyone hanging around, myself included. He points out a Thanksgiving Day buffet being set up along the bar at the back of the room, and urges me to try some of the baked fish and macaroni. Bassist Dwayne Fowler arrives with an entourage, and his two tiny daughters mosh playfully out on the empty floor while the band blasts out some sample tunes.

I ease to the side of the stage and catch grinning guitarist Rich Ward has he descends at the end of the soundcheck. It's the first time we've met, but he's happy to see me and leads me around to a massive rack of assorted guitars at the far left rear corner of the room. Rich begins the process of selecting one for me. "We tune all our instruments one whole step down from what's normal," he explains, "so it's probably better for you to play one of mine instead of whatever you brought yourself."

Hey, I'm easy.

Rich grins mischievously at me. "How would you like to play a very old Explorer?"

I nod like an idiot. My favorite guitars are the Fender Jazzmaster and the Mosrite Venturesl but — wow — a Gibson Explorer?! Hey, I've wanted to get my hands on one of those crazy-looking things ever since I saw The Edge play

one at a U2 concert back in 1981. Rich hefts the oddly shaped ax down off the rack and carries it over to a burly guy who's changing the strings on a Les Paul. He introduces me to the fellow — his guitar tech, Jack — and then straps the Explorer around my neck. We play a few bars of "Sweet Leaf" together, the Explorer plugged into a tiny toy Marshall amp that's been duct-taped to the top of Rich's massive stack.

Rich calls out the chords and smiles as my fingers form them. "OK, I gotta go meet with our manager now," he says apologetically after several successful trial runs, "so I'm gonna leave you with Jack. Go ahead and practice as much as you want."

For another 10 minutes I get comfortable with the guitar. Jack helps me set the thick, black leather strap to the correct length (I'm a lot taller than Rich), and I experiment a little with the angle at which I hold the instrument. Finally, after a few more run-throughs, I let out a long sigh and unsling it.

"Are ya ready?" asks Jack.

I smile and shrug. "Ready as I'll ever be."

He takes the Explorer from me, and, with a sigh I stroll off toward that buffet line at the far end of the hall. I'm so on edge that I barely taste the baked fish at all.

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It's an hour till the doors open, and a line of kids is already waiting outside in the rain. By 9:15 p.m. they're filtering in — a young, excited crowd, all dressed in T-shirts and ballcaps, many Wreck Room regulars wearing souvenirs from Damnage and Witch Doctor shows as well as vintage Mojowear. Fans line up along the edge of the stage and around the walls, leaving the center of the floor open until attendance reaches 900. They crush together as it creeps toward the thousand mark.

At 9:35 p.m. the stagelights wink for Wicker Man, who wallop a hard-hammering attack and perpetrate pulverizing grunge/ metal. An hour later Machine Head offer more of the same.

Mojo make the scene just shy of midnight, and the mosh action accelerates to a bloody boil. I watch with a mix of horror and amazement as slender young shutterbug Rebecca O'Brien walks along the very edge of the stage, clutching a camera, her professional eye trained tightly on the performers and blithely oblivious to the jackbooted moshers who sail over her head and the swooping sledgehammer feet that miss the back of her skull by mere millimeters. She pauses only to light a cigarette and to reload her camera.

Stuck Mojo EW now doin' what they do best: the "Mojo Snap" — mashing metallic crunch-funk fusion.

"This next song is a singalong!" shouts Bonz, and without any further prompting the crowd roars back in unison at him, "Promised! Tomorrow!"

As a thousand fans flail frantically to the tune, Mojo manager Mark Willis leans over and mutters quietly into my ear: "And the radio programmers say there's no interest in this song."

Alas, he's right. The gap between what's rockin' on the radio and what's snappin' necks in clubs has never looked wider to me than it does right now.

A few minutes later, Rich introduces me and calls me out to play the Ozzy tune with him. Jack-the-tech hands me the now well-tuned Explorer with one hand, a guitar pick with the other. Thus armed, I walk out on the stage and stand beside Rich as the tune takes off. Watching him with nervous excitement, I follow Rich's lead through the chord changes and let the Sabbath sound roar from the speakers behind and beside me.

But in place of Ozzy's "I love you, Sweet Leaf," Bonz is now hopping around yelling, "Smoke marijuana! Smoke marijuana!" The stage fills with fog, some of which may indeed be from spliffs of the substance about which he sings. It's a wild, smoky, intoxicating moment. Rich and I crunch chords and sling strings together as the set crashes to its clarion closing above hundreds of happily hopping heads. Rich even leaves the stage, passing his gold metal-flake Les Paul to Jack, who dashes out beside me. Together Jack and I finish the song while the seething, jumping, cheering, clapping, boiling mass of the crowd goes totally gonzo.

What do they call this upper deck of the club again? Yeah, right now it really does feel like Heaven.

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A few weeks afterward, Mojo manager Mark sends me a tape of my performance — which turns out to be a devastatingly sobering account of that brief moment of glory. Yeah, I'm playing the song with the band all right, but I'm nearly half a beat behind Rich on every almost every chord, like some weird echo effect.

Hmm . . . I guess I took the notion of following his lead a little too literally. I pour a beer and get back behind my computer keyboard, taking comfort in the notion that at least I'm a fair writer, even if I'm a lousy guitarist.

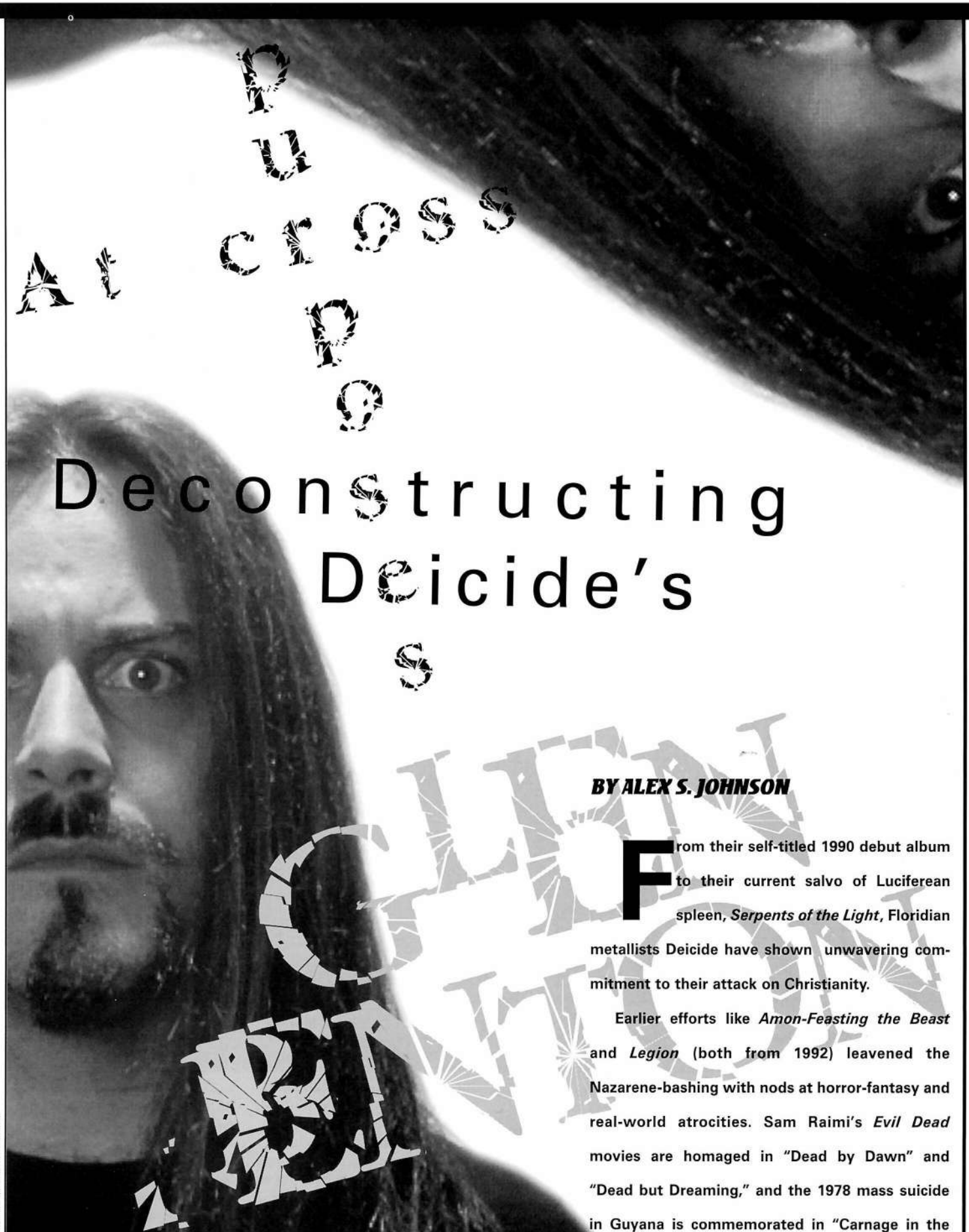
Later I learn that bassist Dwayne Fowler has left the band to concentrate on his family life and will be replaced by a cheerful American Indian fellow named Corey Lowery; and Brent Payne retires to the shadows as a long succession of drummers take their turn atop the Mojo drumstool.

Life goes on, and Mojo continue to grow stronger and harder.

A year later they even ask me to introduce the band at the release party for their *Pigwalk* video and CD. I accept and proudly make my opening remarks from a microphone located back at the soundboard.

This time, however, I leave the stage entirely to professional musicians. J

Brent Payne drums at the Masquerade.



Deconstructing Deicide's Cross Purposes

BY ALEX S. JOHNSON

From their self-titled 1990 debut album to their current salvo of Luciferean spleen, *Serpents of the Light*, Floridian metallists Deicide have shown unwavering commitment to their attack on Christianity.

Earlier efforts like *Amon-Feasting the Beast* and *Legion* (both from 1992) leavened the Nazarene-bashing with nods at horror-fantasy and real-world atrocities. Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* movies are homaged in "Dead by Dawn" and "Dead but Dreaming," and the 1978 mass suicide in Guyana is commemorated in "Carnage in the Temple of the Damned."

PHOTOS BY ALEX McKNIGHT/ROADRUNNER

By contrast, *Serpents of the Light* (Roadrunner, 1997) strips down the Deicide message to one mean, Christ-hating machine. Featuring songs with lyrics like, "Fuck your religion with blood on its hands" (from "I am no One"), *Serpents* dissolves all remaining doubts as to the band's stance on the church.

Hint: They're not fond of it.

Deicide's love/hate relationship with the music press has fostered depictions of the band — particularly singer/bassist Glen Benton — as either crazed evil incarnates or dope-clouded metal Neanderthals. Or both. There's a good reason for this. From his home in Elfers, Florida, Benton admits that he's prone to extreme statements at times, given his mood and the attitude of the reporter. "Sometimes I'm giving interviews with people that I don't like, and I'll say what they want to hear. When somebody shows up and their eyes are as big as fucking golf balls, it's like, they want that craziness. When they ask me questions in that frame of mind, I give it to them."

Also playing a part in this fanzine perception is Benton's Mephistophelean goatee, villainous moustache and long black locks, coupled with the inverted cross branded into his forehead (the result of an eight-month application with hot metal as a teen). "I'm a creepy-looking character," the 31-year-old singer says with a laugh.

The rest of Deicide — lead ax-attack brothers Eric and Brian Hoffman and drummer Steve Asheim — look like a bunch of pool-hall rumblers. You wouldn't want to meet these guys in a dark alley.

Even with personal appearances set aside, listeners can conjure up an imposing picture of extreme darkness from the relentlessly blasphemous lyrics and graphical content of Deicide albums, such as the autopsied Christ painting in the fold-out booklet to *Once Upon the Cross* (1995).

Therefore, disrobing the press-spawned, demonic mantle is a challenge. One such myth is Benton's promised demise at age 33. "In a conversation a long time ago, I made the mistake of saying that at the age of 33, I think I'm going to be kicking it."

That unfortunate quote gave rise to a raft of urban legends, Benton says. "'Glen's got a suicide pact at 33,' . . . 'The whole band's gonna kill themselves at 33.' I've heard it all, man. Everybody has premonitions, right? Lennon had premonitions that he'd die a violent death, and I have premonitions of how I'm gonna go. Age 33 — I don't know where the hell it came from. That's just a number that comes up in my life a lot."

The Glen Benton of *Serpents of the Light* reflects a more mature attitude. He refers to the earlier records as a product of his "chaotic days — the end of adolescence and the beginning of the chaos of adulthood." He says, "Back on the other records, the old stuff, there's a lot of my nightmares. I would write parts of my dreams and stuff like that. So there was a lot of fantasy there, but I've weaned myself off between the last record (*Once Upon the Cross*) and this one.

"I laid out the other three records in front of me, and looked at all the lyrics, and I said to myself, 'Let's look at this more intelligently, and let's use some simple words. Let's get back to the simplicity of the reasons and the beliefs of organized religion, my dislike for it, everything that goes with it.' I just didn't want to do another record of 'Satan, Satan, Satan, bup bup bah, can't understand what I'm saying, just a bunch of nonsense man,' so I figured that I would look at this one and just write personally . . . just take stuff from me, and use it for the songs. "

When you get right down to it, Benton is really a funny, very down-to-Earth and pragmatic individual whose career choice happens to be frontman for a Satanic death metal band.

While these character traits might disappoint fans preferring a cloven-hooved

monolith, the mundane version is quite likable in itself. He's the proud father of a 5-year-old son. When Benton drops the phone for a moment, the proceeding scene rings as eerie only for its utter domesticity: his wife's loss of her charge card; a TV blaring in the background and a child's voice making insistent demands.

It's when the conversation turns to Benton's thoughts on religion that the more sinister persona seems to emerge. However, his insights are still far from the ramblings of a demented occultist. "I think what we really need is to wake the fuck up before it's too late," he says. "I think people need to start looking at religion for what it really is, and

that's a fucking freak-show side-show. It's a money-making business just like anything else."

This is hardly the stuff of controversy; Sinclair Lewis made much the same point in *Babbit*, considered an American classic. But in context of the hide-bound standards of Benton's upbringing in western upstate New York, it's a brave stance indeed.

"I come from a very small Catholic community," Benton says. "Or should I say, big Catholic community, small town, and if you're weren't a Christian, you were a heathen. You couldn't date their daughters or nothing, man, 'cause you didn't believe in God, or opposed it, had evil thoughts and dressed the part or looked the part, or believed the part."

Previous interviews with Benton have painted a dire portrait of a troubled childhood, during which he was subject to psychoanalysis and medication after questioning the nature of death. These articles foster the notion that Benton was some kind of dark visionary, with thoughts beyond the ken of simple-minded neighbors.

The truth, again, is less dramatic but much more credible. "I was what would be termed as a hyper kid," he explains. "When I was younger, they tried all the Ritalin kind of crap on me for a couple of weeks, two or three weeks or whatever, and that just made me worse. And as I got older, I'd probably seen

every school psychiatrist going through school. . . . It really didn't amount to anything except that I was an individual, and I had individualistic ideas."

Such ideas, Benton says, include the nature of evil, which he defines as a philosophy of self-interest: "I'm just completely enwrapped in what I believe in, and what I believe in is evil. I don't believe in God, but I do believe something out there is good and evil exists, so I kind of find it hard to label myself agnostic or atheist. The shit that funnels out my mind, man, it's coming from somewhere; I don't know where it is, but I'll go with it, and, if you want to call it Satan, I call it Satan."

This outlook of his, Benton admits, limits the audience. Which is why Benton bristles at the notion, propagated by some music critics, that Deicide is just a shallow exercise in commercialism; that they're jerking the Satan chain for cash. "People say that we're commercial, which is kind of bullshit. 'Cause if we were commercial, then I wouldn't have to worry about fucking having to feed my kid. I wouldn't have to worry about having to pawn this and pawn that to pay my bills and knocking on the record company's door for advances all the time."

In fact, Benton's got some back-up plans in case his music stops paying the bills. He's equally proficient as a mechanic, carpet-layer, construction worker and general fix-it man. And, as the proud new owner of a high-school equivalency certificate, Benton's ready to take on new challenges: a career in electronics or possibly computers. Waxing on this subject, he sounds like a TV commercial for a trade school: "All you kids wasting your money going to college, make sure you take something that's gonna pay good, you know. 'Cause this is a big, big world, and if you ain't getting into a demanding career field there, you are definitely going to be standing in a bunch of lines."

Bentons' eye-on-the-dollar attitude, combined with a familiar sense of mission, explains why Deicide's lineup has remained unchanged during their 10-year existence. "I've managed the band ever since the beginning. As far as business decisions and stuff like that, and so far, we haven't done too bad. A lot of management destroys bands, diving into the pockets of every member. Deicide only have a couple of different people they pay money out to, and that's to our attorney and our booking agency. The rest goes in our pockets, and Uncle Sam's pocket. People think we're rock stars and we live lavish lifestyles . . . I was pawning equipment this month to pay my bills. That tells you how rich a lifestyle I live."

From Deicide's supposed flushness, harvesting a legacy of evil and reaping millions while poor white trash divy up their dollars to Satan, to their status as the heirs of Florida death-metal giants like Death, reality has an answer that falls apart in the wake of fantasy but stands up to the bottom line.

As Benton explains, Deicide arose not from the fullness of a trend ripe for exploitation, but from individual desire. "When we were doing this, [the Florida death-metal scene] was all falling apart. We came out of it just right when it was fucking right on the verge of collapse. And we've never even labeled ourselves death metal."

Far from that. In fact, Deicide stake a claim to the heritage of Bach and Schoenberg. "What we play musically, if you were to play it with strings, you'd realize it's classical music. If you want to say I'm a classical musician, or rock and roll, you call me whatever the fuck you want. It's like when I'm at a 7-Eleven or whatever and people ask, 'What kind of music do you play?' 'Southern rock, man. You don't get no Southerner than what we do.'" J

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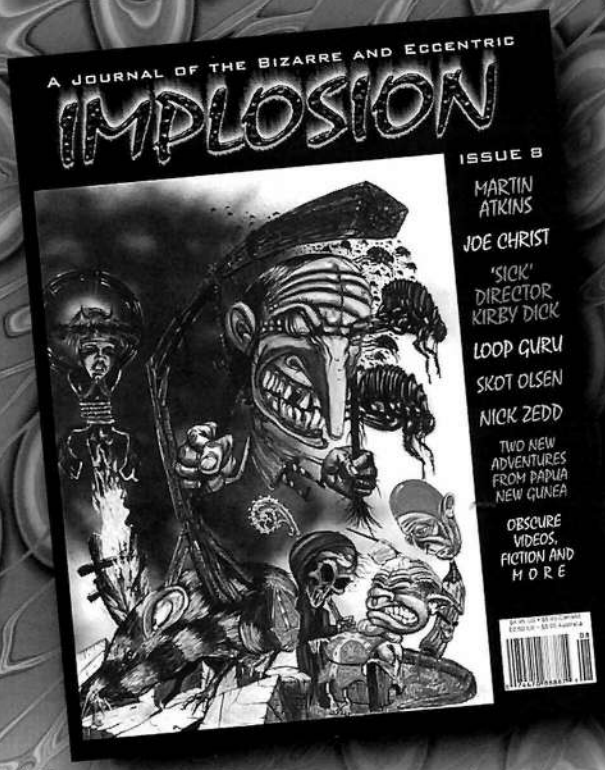

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Hypocrisy's Peter Tagtgren

Still searching for crop circles

By PAULA HOGAN

Prior to its State-side release, fans were made painfully aware that the new album from Sweden's Hypocrisy was to be the band's last. Disheartened followers, painstakingly amassed over a history that spans nine audio offerings, immediately questioned the report. How could a band riding a crest of attention brought forth from an impressive live debut at the 1997 Milwaukee Metal Fest and one truly coming into their own musically call it quits?

"I don't know if this will be the last album," said band mastermind Peter Tagtgren via phone from Abyss Studio in Sweden. "At the time of the decision, I was extremely frustrated with the band. I had played and worked so

hard with Hypocrisy for so many years without any help. I was pretty pissed that I had to do everything, and I had just had enough."

Early response to the aptly titled *The Final Chapter* is bringing Hypocrisy a sizably expanded audience, an element that is certainly factoring into Tagtgren's current point of view. Some of the attention undoubtedly stems from his rising role as one of underground metal's most sought-after record producers, with his personal treasure chest containing the creative likes of Dimmu Borgir, Marduk, Edge of Sanity, Dark Funeral and Love Like Blood — not to mention Tagtgren's own multiple projects.

"I know my production work is helping to get Hypocrisy's name out," Tagtgren said. "The more people hear about me, the more they might be willing to check out the band. I'm fine if that is how they are getting into Hypocrisy. Actually, it's quite flattering."

With seven tracks penned exclusively by Tagtgren, four written by band mates Mikael Hedlund and Lars Szoke, plus a punishing rendition of Razor's "Evil Invaders," *The Final Chapter* is a triumphant accomplishment and a fitting musical epitaph, should it come to be. Conceptually, it reacquaints listeners with Hypocrisy's perpetual science-fiction theme; this particular sequence initially introduced on the band's previous outing, *Abducted*. Its chilling plot, birthed from Tagtgren's personal infatuation with alien doctrines, finds the main character caught at a proverbial crossroads, who, like in all good narratives, experiences terror and pain, and ultimately succumbs to uncontrollable madness and eventual death.

"*The Final Chapter* is divided into three specific chapters," Tagtgren explained. "The first is when the main character realizes he's been victimized by aliens conducting DNA research in hopes of cultivating a new race. During the second chapter, he experiences flashbacks and discovers that he's been the subject of these harsh treatments all his life, but when he goes to the government for help they deny him. In the third and final chapter, he takes his life."

For new listeners, *The Final Chapter* presents Hypocrisy's dynamic blend of precision and tone, a mixture that has over time been applauded by both critics and fellow musicians. As you work your way through the album, you will be quick to observe that lyrics to only one song, "The Final Chapter," have found their way onto the album's simple packaging, a trait quite unusual for a concept album.

"I'm really hard on myself regarding my lyrics," said Tagtgren. "That's why I've only put one lyric on all our albums." It is this perfectionist characteristic that has led Tagtgren to omit many songs, some altogether scratched, from earlier recordings.

"The Final Chapter" is actually an old song that was initially intended as a bonus track, Tagtgren said. "Nuclear Blast wanted to use it on a compilation, but I didn't think it was good enough, so I held it. Originally I didn't even put vocals on it."

Tagtgren, like many other prominent musicians, plays a vital role in his band. As vocalist, guitarist, main songwriter and producer, he makes the ultimate sacrifice for Hypocrisy, and it isn't always a rewarding position to be in. For the dedicated 27-year-old, who recently completed production on the debut from Sweden's Withered Beauty, the most difficult experience was the creation of his one-man project, Pain.

"Pain is something I'm very proud of," says Tagtgren. "It is me doing everything; I play every instrument on the album as well as producing and writing. It was extremely difficult, but I had to do it. I needed to prove something to myself."

A genuine passion since childhood, music has always been an outlet for Tagtgren, he said. Since he took up the drums at age 8, the personable and witty musician has constantly surrounded himself with all things musical. Much of his early exposure came from his older brother, whom he remains close to. He picked up guitar in 1985 when he met up with Szoke.

"I still consider myself to be a drummer," Tagtgren said. "I never practice guitar; I only play when I write. I quit out of boredom but started back up again in 1992 when Lars and I formed Hypocrisy.

"I still like to play drums. In public I play drums in Abyss," he said, speaking of his blackened side project with Hedlund and Szoke. "It feels good. Most people don't know that I've played drums on a lot of Hypocrisy songs. Lars is more into black metal, so it's easier for him to write material for Abyss, which is OK with me."

It has taken Hypocrisy years to develop their intense yet uniquely styled sound. Their early recordings, namely *Penetralia* (1992, featuring Dark Funeral's Masse Broberg on vocals), *Inferior Devoties* (1993), *Obculum Obscenum* (1994), and to some extent *The Fourth Dimension* (1995), are excessively raw and stripped-down when compared to the sonic perfection found on the trio's more current material. Despite the early elementary sound, Hypocrisy have consistently connected with an increasingly thriving audience.

"The real turning point for us was with *The Fourth Dimension,*" Tagtgren said. "That's when Nuclear Blast really started to work for us. Since the beginning of 1995 every album has done better. Things just keep going straight up."

Abducted was the album that launched Hypocrisy to critical acclaim. Their songwriting improved 10-fold when diversity and melody entered the mix. Tagtgren unveiled his heavy Pink Floyd influence, heard in the delivery of both his vocals and guitar work, most notably on "Reflections," "Slippin' Away" and "Drained." Audiences raved about the monumental accomplishment, but, for Hypocrisy, the album was pure agony. As Tagtgren recalled, "It was the hardest album for us to do. We were trying so hard I couldn't play for shit. It took us 70 days to record, which is an unbelievably long time for us. We were dropping songs all the time."

As well as *Summon The Beast* — the only album from The Abyss, and the self-titled *Pain,* Tagtgren has produced each of Hypocrisy's seven albums. Abyss Studios, which he owns and runs, recently relocated to a larger and more comfortable facility. Its location, 100 feet from his home, allows the musician ample time to focus on projects (which, Tagtgren said, he certainly takes advantage of). The studio is completely booked for 1998, including new albums from Dimmu Borgir and Enslaved.

As a producer, Tagtgren has steadily built a solid reputation yet maintains a healthy and surprisingly humble attitude regarding his work. His transition from musician to producer has been gradual and similar in comparison to the careers of Dan Swano (Edge of Sanity), Brian Griffith (Broken Hope) and Waldemar Sorychta (Grip Inc.).

"Originally, producing was out of necessity, because we had so little money to record," he said. "Every album is a learning process for me, and I'm getting better and better. I record about 15 bands a year. It is great, because I don't really make any money from my bands. It's a lot of fun too."

"Most of my production influences tend to come from music I listened to as a kid. I really admire Bob Rock and Bob Ezrin. What he did in 1976 with Kiss's *Destroyer* is amazing. George Martin is also great."

When asked about how he decides what bands to work with, Tagtgren answered, "I will work with whoever calls and books the studio. I don't really make a big deal about who it is. It would be nice to work with bigger bands, but I'm happy just getting the opportunity and the work."

For someone so surrounded with music, Tagtgren surprisingly said he doesn't listen to much new music. "I'm in the studio all day, and the last thing I want to do is listen to more," he said.

So instead of seeking out new albums in his free time, he said he keeps an eye out for vintage items — particularly

those related to Kiss. "I have everything: drums, gold albums, lunchboxes, trashcans. I even have bookbags, a radio-controlled car and all the original Kiss dolls from 1978. I'm constantly looking for promo albums, so that keeps me busy.

"I also have an obvious interest in aliens. I am fascinated mostly by real-life accounts and actual sighting reports. I watch a lot of television documentaries, especially when I lived in Florida; Discovery and the Sci-fi Channel had some great programs."

Perhaps it was Tagtgren's exemplary — if not manic — work ethic that factored into his initial decision to disband Hypocrisy. He commented: "I was just frustrated. As much as I appreciate and respect them, Mikael and Lars are very lazy. It was just me in the studio during much of the recording of *The Final Chapter.* They stayed around for the first week but only when they were needed. I really wanted more out of them. I wanted it to feel more like a band."

He continued: "It hasn't always been this way. It's gradually gotten worse. Lars has kids, so he obviously has a big responsibility to his family. But it is usually him who calls to check in. Mikael does have a genuine interest and likes Hypocrisy. He's currently working in the other studio [the original location of Abyss]. I just don't know what's going on with him."

Even with his sometimes unbearable work load, Tagtgren said his unshakeable determination and energy help him to complete each of the tasks and roles he devotedly fills.

"I've always had a lot of energy, especially as a kid," he said. "I guess I'm lucky that it's stayed with me. I was a monster in school. I beat everyone up. I remember my parents having to constantly write checks for things I destroyed. I hold my school's record of breaking the most windows. And in third grade I was always beating up sixth graders. I never cut classes, but I had no interest in school. I guess you could say I was the class clown. Once I even tried to burn down my school."

Milwaukee Metal Fest played host to Hypocrisy in 1997. A New York City date was originally planned but had to be cancelled due to travel difficulties. Fans anticipating the debut appearance arrived early at the Eagle Auditorium's Grand Ballroom. It didn't hurt matters any that Cradle of Filth and Venom where scheduled directly after Hypocrisy. For the band it was a great opportunity and an experience they recall kindly, Tagtgren said.

"Milwaukee was absolutely amazing for us," Tagtgren said. "The crowd was so good. We knew there would be people there to see just us, but I think we found many new fans. We really hope to return to the States this year."

Hypocrisy have never been an active touring band. Their only major outings have been for a label tour in 1994 and in support of *Abducted*, when they teamed up with labelmates Meshuggah. They have yet to play the larger European metal festivals, including Dynamo's Open Air. Playing at the annual festival in Holland is one of Tagtren's short-term goals, he said.

"Our first tour was with Cannibal Corpse," he said. "That was a great opportunity. Fear Factory and Desultory were on the tour too. We did a Nuclear Blast tour with Amorphis, Meshuggah and Dismember. It would be great to play on the big festival shows; that's something every European metal band wants to do. The crowd is massive and from all over."

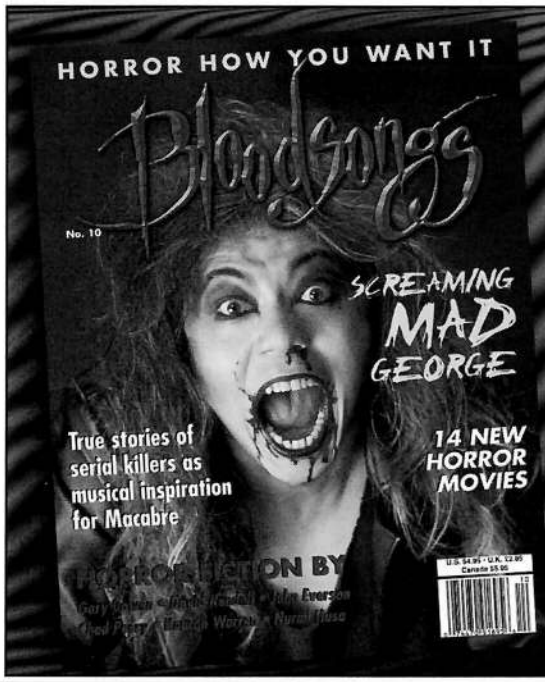
Tagtgren is now working on a second Pain album. Basic tracks had been recorded for a number of songs, including vocals for one. At press time it had not been determined if Nuclear Blast would be releasing the album, although the American division had reportedly expressed interest.

"This album will be very different from the first," Tagtgren said. It's more in the techno range but with really heavy guitars. I can only describe it as Metallica meets Prodigy. I was working on vocals for one of the songs the other day. That one was particularly hard, because I am really singing on it. It took me two days to record, and I still don't think I've gotten it right. I don't have any song titles yet; that's usually the last thing I do, but I plan to record 10 or 11 songs."

While eager fans await Tagtgren's multitude of projects, planned for scattered release throughout 1998, the question once again rises. Is this really the end for Hypocrisy?

"The plan right now is to reissue the album on a shaped CD, similar to the one we did for *Maximum Abduction*," a chicken-shaped disc featuring "Request Denied," also included on *The Final Chapter*.

Tagtgren continued: "We are also working on an album of left-overs that will contain our first demo and other really old stuff. From there — we'll just have to wait and see." J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MORBID ANGEL'S TREY AZAG

A PREACHER IN A MUSICIAN'S DISGUISE?

THOTH

The world of Trey-bonics is open to visitors. Admission is free. Anyone with a little imagination and a hankering for fun is welcome.

Challenged by himself to prove that the departure of singer/bassist David Vincent was inconsequential to the fate of Morbid Angel, guitarist Trey Azagthoth set upon his quest to discover who had been the force behind the band's heaviness and speed all along. Although no animosity lingers between the two (the band jam in a building Vincent owns), many fans believed that Vincent's departure for his wife's whip-wielding Genitorturers spelled doomsday for one of death metal's premier outfits.

It seems as if Azagthoth has won his conquest, from the sounds of the most recent Morbid Angel album. *Formulas Fatal to the Flesh* tellingly reveals who has been the backbone of the band in its 10-year existence. While other groups whose names start with "M" have over-ripened and turned soft as the years progressed, this is not the case for Morbid Angel. Their most recent — and ultimately evil — effort is filled with the flesh-heavy guitars that have embodied their music through the years. Azagthoth's intoxicating guitar solos blast off free of the masturbatory excess of say, six-string maestro Yngwie Malmsteen. Drummer Pete Sandoval continues to propel the band with his precise double-bass skills, and new vocalist/bassist Steve Tucker (formerly of Ceremony) provides the throat Azagthoth has always coveted. More than ever, Morbid Angel have swung clear of the genericism that has dogged extreme metal, with its legions of growling clones in lip service to Satan. (Never mind the demise of Morbid's former label, Giant, and the band's return to Earache).

Says Azagthoth from his spacious Land O' Lakes, Florida, home that he shares with his wife, "That's the common belief, that, as you get older, you're supposed to do this [soften up]. This [album] is one more living example of the hope and result of the whole immensity and meaning of things, this whole idea of 'I am' and being the man — being your own leader. What's your code of honor? What's your code of value? What's your way of thinking about things — your own format of life? That is the triumph." He pauses briefly for emphasis. "That is the crown of affections."

Azagthoth, 32, says he has always been drawn to the excessive thrill of speed. He even drives a 1998 Trans Am — complete "with the RAM air package." He began putting together Morbid Angel even before pioneering groups such as Death surfaced. "It was my hunger for more extreme, more spiritual, more impact," he says.

At 5-foot-11 and 140 pounds, Azagthoth is sinewy and lean. "Football players may look at me like I'm a weakling. I wish I could gain a little more of that fat so I could have a good base. But I'll take the muscle. When I exercise, it really makes a difference." He says he's a BMX bike enthusiast but sticks with basic jumps he set up in his backyard. He is limited in the variety of stunts, he says, because he has to keep his guitar-playing hands injury-free. "It takes a lot of energy to ride on a bike with only one gear on dirt," he asserts.

BY ARY NUSSBAUM

However, touring and playing live are what Azagthoth says he finds a "true celebration for people with a central purpose."

This is coming from someone whose mouth has been streaked with blood during performances. "It was always real blood, and it wasn't from biting myself like some people thought," he says. "It was from cutting myself in a blood-letting ritual." Before each show, he says, he would cut himself on the arm and drink the blood to open up "into something beyond what I was."

In regard to the spiritual, Azagthoth almost speaks in tongues, lecturing in what could be referred to as "Trey-bonics." With a slight Southern twang, he describes what he calls "the triumvirate" or "ancient ones," a concept he created by mixing and matching yin and yang, cabala, and motivational poobah Tony Robbins.

"There are three steps," Azagthoth begins. "The first one is Cthulhu: the spirit name. It stands for 'I am the living act of God. I am the one who will create the happenings of my life.' That right there is the claiming and making a decision for getting empowered with the realization, 'Hey, it's up to us to make a difference in our lives.'

"We're not supposed to be waiting around for other people to make it for us. If we do that, we might not like their plans. I'm just here to say we all have the power. That's our spirit.

"Number 2, Habsu: 'I will. My true will cannot be denied. I will choose my own path.' Our willpower is our power, our main energy to do, to make things happen and committing to that.

"Number 3, Amah Ushumgal-anna: 'I create. I create myself as well as my world. I create, for I am such an incredible dreamer. I create for my imagination for my workshop. I create, for I design the type of life, and destiny I will become.'"

It is within this long-winded framework, Azagthoth explains, that Morbid Angel exist. Reverting back to everyday English, he sums up his beliefs: "We gotta get empowered and realize it's up to us. [If] we're not doing it, it ain't gonna happen. That's the three steps of unstoppability."

Challenge is the key to growth, he continues. "It's like exercise. Take away the resistance, take gravity — that's what makes weights or running or anything like that effective." For illustration, he adds that astronauts, when deprived of gravity, have to exercise intensely so that their muscles won't atrophy.

Back on the topic of Vincent's departure, Azagthoth says it has been a positive development for the band. "The purpose of Morbid Angel is bigger now than ever before with David, because David was starting to move into the mundane, and I'm way beyond the mundane. The mundane does not interest me.

"Now that he's gone," he continues, "I'm able to set things up the way the ancient ones want. Everything is a manifestation of them. They are a higher part of ourselves, a step beyond what we are. Humans cannot be perfect in the eyes of the absolute perfectionist, because someone could always break it down and say, 'Well, it could have been better.' That's good; we should always try to be better, because that promotes growth, which is the meaning of life.

"The whole idea is that, in our human, mundane form, the human is a failing, miserable creature. But our true will, spirit and other gifts we have from our creator are the only thing we have that is perfection, though it is shrouded by human folly. That's why I say, 'Flesh over spirit is the motivator of the workplace.'"

He continues: "My stuff should only be used to open people's minds. Let them come up with their own stuff. To me, the best belief is the one where you are part of the design. I'm just saying these are my ideas, and they fuckin' work. Look at my life. I have a degree in result. I never took lessons for guitar playing. I never went to a class for classical composition. My results are the result of the things I'm talking about."

Motivational pep talk or not, Azagthoth's guitar playing includes innovative recording and mixing techniques that give his lead work on *Formula's Fatal to the Flesh* a distinct quality. The guitar solos on "Nothing is Not" were recorded by taking a directional mic, placing it against a glass bubble "and putting the glass bubble against the speaker cabinet so that it's not getting any air," he says. "The only thing it gets is the vibration of the glass, vibrated by all the air hitting it from the exterior, creating this really impressive waveform pattern inside this controlled environment. That's what makes the solos sound the way [they do]. It makes it so bloated and fat."

Azagthoth says he believes life is about having fun — not in the purely self-indulgent, needle-in-the-vein fashion, but rather in the free-form fashion of a kid who doesn't want to get bogged down with mundane certainties. He says he looks at everything with all possibilities, and if he can imagine something, it excites him.

"The next step is to take that enthusiasm into the real world and make great accomplishments that are grounded results," he says. "Therefore, it is not just an illusion. If you're just a dreamer and never do anything in the real world, you just dream about it, you never manifest anything into validity, then that's what someone calls a guy who's got a problem." In this seemingly holy writ of Azagthoth, dreams should translate into achievement.

"It's all stuff Tony Robbins talks about. I think he's brilliant. He talks about how we have the power to represent things ourselves. No matter what's happening in the world, we can control of what's impacting our life. That's about being the man and being in control," he says passionately, dropping mad respect for Robbins all along. Deservedly calling the new album his "creation," (he wrote all the music and lyrics) Azagthoth says he doesn't believe the other members feel left out of the writing process. Acknowledging a positive aspect of this — that he is the sole recipient of the band's royalties — he insists that this had nothing to do with money. "Steve's got great ideas, and I'm sure he'll come up with stuff but I didn't want anything to contradict. And Pete's a drummer. Drummers don't write songs." (At least not for Morbid Angel.)

Artists paint for themselves, Azagthoth emphasized. "Whenever you start to bring in other people, then you talk about this big chaos, where you get all sorts of people liking different things. Like with our band, not everybody likes the same damn thing. That's why I try to come from all the different angles. Now with the message, that's the word of the triumvirate and is supposed to be expressed. If they ignore it, that's fine. But I'm giving it to them. I'm showing them beautiful things [that are] gonna make things happen in their lives if they do this. It's definitely not just a lot of babble like a lot of other bands."

He recognizes that this critique could be turned against him as well. One might argue that Azagthoth is just trading in pseudo-mystical claptrap without substance or meaning. Goaded on, he says, "Well, they can look at themselves as the Christians looked at the pagans and called them heretics because they couldn't understand where they were coming from and thought that their stuff was against their own beliefs."

Meanwhile, Agagthoth is convinced that metal is primed for another popularity explosion. "Metal is always up and down. Everything is up and down. People get bored with something, it gets pushed to its limits, and then they want something else."

A take-control kind of guy, Azagthoth then launches into a discourse contrasting the core of two closely related subcategories: black metal and death metal.

"To me, black metal usually has bands that have absolute, strong convictions in the things they believe. They are so into what's wrong. There are bands that are the vessel of expressing these beliefs.

"Death metal are the people who just want to be overbearing for that point of view. I think, in both ways, you have a total extreme version of something being pushed. I think death metal has definitely pushed itself to the limit. I mean there are people who want to play fast, by whatever means necessary — guitar, overbearing drums and really overbearing vocals. Black metal is a little bit more of a religious thing, where the purpose and the meaning of what they're conveying through the music is most principle and important to them."

With Azagthoth writing the lyrics as well as the music, Morbid Angel undoubtedly meet both classifications. **J**

EXTREMELY LIVE

Crisis
Bottom Of The Hill
San Francisco
Jan. 26, 1998

CRISIS IS ABOUT purity of emotion, rabid self-exploration and eventual vaccination of the germs maliciously sporulating in the hidden fissures of a broken soul. The band's recordings are uncomfortably brutal confrontations with pain — harrowing to listen to yet oddly fulfilling.

As I write this I remember a recent conversation that I had with vocalist Karyn Crisis. She told me that as important as the studio recordings are to her and her fellow bandmates, the most profound sense of emotion and catharsis comes in the form of live performance where actual creation takes place with energy raw and unmitigated by studio controls. Her comment is sticks with me, three days after catching the band live in San Francisco.

I left the club that night stumbling over my jaw as I attempted to pick it up from off the floor, and, honestly, I've felt a bit off kilter ever sense. What I experienced that night was the profound impact that such pure introspective emotion can have on the performers as well as the audience. Crisis plays for itself, bottom line, and I couldn't help feeling a bit voyeuristic as I witnessed what was clearly a profound rite of emotional cleansing. Wanting for naught in the technical department, the band tore through the majority of The Hollowing's complex material, swinging back and forth like a pendulum from intricate time changes to pounding repetition with well-oiled concision. Guitarist Afzaal, bassist Gia and drummer Jason, interacting minimally with the crowd, appeared to lose themselves in the presence of their craft, but the wrenching impact of their music only made their withdrawn affects more appropriate.

Karyn, beginning the set crouched down with her back to the audience as if to summon energy from some hidden place within her, rose up with the music, seeming to transcend her tiny frame as she worked to exorcise the demons feasting within her. The space she took up was astonishing, both physically through her movement and emotionally by holding the audience's rapt attention. Her flawless vocal performance was made that much more amazing when considering the huge range and intensity of her vocal style, matched with the violent physicality of her stage contortions. Lyrically she describes the numbness stemming from isolation and abuse, but those words are delivered by a warrior, not a victim, whose strength is both deeply inspirational and jarring. She clearly has a war going on side of her, and the stage is her battleground where she finds Godzilla-like strength to stomp on an enemy that suddenly isn't quite so powerful.

This is not just about music for Crisis. This is about something so much bigger, a healing so much more profound, a growth so much more essential. That night Crisis awakened something with in me, introduced me to a bit of strength I didn't know I had, and maybe, just maybe, gave a crowd of people the courage to look their own monsters in the eye.

— ANDREW CORSON

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Today Is The Day's Steve Austin

PHOTO BY IZALIA RONCALLO/JUGGERNAUT

Loners' Gathering
(Unsane, Untra Bide,
Today is the Day and Elvis 77)
Coney Island High
New York City
Jan. 30, 1998

I am a tired old man. I am cranky and irritable and best left alone, at home, where I can watch CNN and bitch and read and write till all the poison goes away. I am not the guy you want at your party.

Maybe this is what continues to draw me to whatever you want to call the school of music Unsane and Today Is The Day belong to: noise rock, hatecore, post-hardcore, whatever. Regardless of names, I dig it. Of course, I have my objections (I have my objections to just about anything you can name), but, in general, the genre seems to have a vitality that coheres it, especially in New York City. The Village seems to be a combination magnet/breeding-pit for these bands: Deadguy, Elvis 77, to a lesser extent Brutal Truth, Crisis, Candiria, and, of course, Unsane. I'm sure I've left lots of names off this list, but I'm less certain that I care. I'm not a yearbook editor.

Anyhow, like I said, I pretty much dig the noise-core thang when it's well-played and hoarsely shouted. And Unsane, just by virtue of actual talent on their instruments, seem to be rising well above the majority.

I remember when I first heard their Matador debut album (the one with the photo of the guy lying on the train tracks with his head cut off by the train). The vocals sounded like they were coming through a pay phone, or maybe the public-address system on New Jersey Transit.

The bass was a juddering mass of rumbles and clangs that emerged finally like someone striking telephone cables (the ones that lead from the pole to the ground) with a pipewrench. The guitar was a hissing and screeching thing, often nearly separate from the overall thrust of the "songs" and seemingly on the verge of going completely out of control. The drums were minimal to say the least; a whacking snare seemed to give some indication of rhythm and certainly made the case for some sort of forward impetus, but percussion as a source of melodic embellishment had clearly never been discussed. The drums on the first Unsane album served the same purpose as the drum on a slave ship: Keep it moving, guys, keep it moving.

It was, all things considered, a disturbing and psychotically *focused* record . . . Unsane understood that noise and discipline are not mutually exclusive, but rather go hand in hand, a lesson taught by earlier (instrumental) NYC noise trio Blind Idiot God, who alternated blasting punk-metal workouts (they once explained that they didn't have a singer "because nobody can scream loud enough to get over the sound we make") with lavish dub soundscapes. Unsane skipped the dubwisdom, allowed that whatever vocal could make it through the firestorm was vocal aplenty, and began making their mark.

Of course, as their career progressed, their music progressed as well. They got a new drummer, because the old one couldn't keep his shit together and he died (remember, kids, drugs are bad . . . this message has been brought to you by Anheuser Busch and Philip Morris). At some point they changed bassists too, but each replacement member seems to have drawn the band together into a more cohesive unit. There's much less fly-off-the-handle in their current manifestation, and much more overall impression of an air-tight machine, eating up ground as it comes right for your fucking face.

So anyhow. . . . Earlier I was saying that I think some deep inner hostility on my own part is what draws me to the music of Unsane. I think the general nihilism expressed in everything from their name to their album covers to their song titles (I can't speak for their lyrics, because, well, have you heard Chris Spencer "sing"? OK then) reflects a nihilism prevalent not only in NYC, but which is rapidly overtaking the young nation as a whole. And I'm not talking about the "decade of disaffection" that starts when you're 14, that every kid goes through and which usually makes itself known (and burns itself out) in the form of a stupid haircut in a silly color, or possibly some really irritating shoes, or a tattoo that's easily hidden when it's time for that first big post-college job interview. I'm talking about the wave of societal abandonment that seems more apparent every time I care to look. A greater and greater portion of young America is taking a long look at the corporatization of the society around them, and they are choosing to simply

walk away. This was for some time misinterpreted by the major media as mere apathy, but, as filmmaker Richard Linklater said, "There's a big difference between apathy and withdrawing in disgust."

The Unsane listening audience is in large part a group of bitter cranks and loners. People who work at low-paying jobs because the minor financial insecurity is a small price to pay for not having to feel at the end of every day that you've been raped for eight straight hours. People who see the soul-grinding cruelty at the heart of the American social structure, who know *instinctively* that their putative "leaders" and "role models" are thieves and shills for corporate evil, and choose to take as little part in the battle for King-of-the-Garbage-Dump as possible.

These were the people who assembled at the well-known NYC firetrap Coney Island High to witness Unsane's set. There was, of course, the expected element of socialization, greetings extended between members of the audience, but overall the tone was less like a party and more like a batch of refugees — hidden folks coming out from under their respective bricks to gather momentarily and tentatively, then vanish once again.

The second band of four (about Band No. 1 I shall be merciful and say nothing) was Today Is The Day, one of the two bands I was actually interested in seeing. Let me tell you this about that.

I was mightily impressed with Today Is The Day's latest CD, *Temple Of the Morning Star.* They've successfully crafted a powerful rock artifact, composed equally of Butthole Surfer (circa *Locust Abortion Technician)* and early Cop Shoot Cop elements. Their choice of lyrical subject matter is unfortunately fairly wack, being that they delve heavily into tired Satanic imagery for the underpinnings of a general self-loathing. Nevertheless, they keep the rock rolling on general force of will, and entertainment is certainly provided.

None of the smoothness of their studio presence, however, lingered when they hit stage. Onstage, Today Is The Day mutated into a hellfest of rage and psychodrama the likes of which I haven't seen in many an age. Steve Austin (the band's headman) seemed continually on the verge of significant self-injury, as he contorted his face and body with the necessary effort to howl out his mantras of near-universal hatred. I've got to say, whether you prefer the noisy-but-palatable rages of their studio album or the berserk torment of their live presentation, Today Is The Day are worth your entertainment dollar as two vastly different sides of the same scarred coin.

About Ultra Bide, who preceded Unsane, I will say only this: Stay away from this band. They are wack-ass imitators of close to a thousand better units. Hype is with them at the moment, most especially around NYC, but do not be fooled.

Finally, Unsane hit stage, and the room was ready. And when I say "hit stage," I fucking mean it. The impact of this unit live is not to be underestimated, *ever.* They are tighter than any band shy of Brutal Truth or maybe the Rollins Band, and their force is second to none. Vinny Signorelli is their drummer, and he is the axis upon which they turn. There was no room for any fucking around when he was behind the kit. There was only a constant barrage of tom-rolls and bass-booms and a snare like nobody but maybe old DJ Bonebrake could equal. And above the ocean of drums raged Chris Spencer's knife guitar and Dave Curran's unbelievably detuned and thundering bass, traveling alongside one another but so separated by pitch that the mind and the ear began to shriek in disorientation. There was no sonic unity; the senses began to fly apart and disassociate from the forebrain. Yet the vast machine stayed together, barreling forward like a nightmarish thrumming engine of destruction . . . There were no breaks. The songs came fast and furious, the vast majority coming off the latest CD but the old tunes (sorry, no "Body Bomb") linking cohesively with the bastinado force of the new ones.

Unsane's Chris Spencer

PHOTO BY IZALIA RONCALLO/JUGGERNAUT

Unsane's Vinnie Signorelli

PHOTO BY IZALIA RONCALLO/JUGGERNAUT

I have to admire Unsane for one other thing: They know their music speaks for itself. There was a minimum of onstage bullshit, almost no commentary between band and crowd. Almost no interplay between band and crowd. Unsane's motto could easily be William S. Burroughs's "We do our work, and go."

And all the misanthropes, all the solitary cranks, the haters, the disenfranchised, the dissatisfied, all the lurkers and stalkers and the rejected and rejectors of society were well pleased. They got what they came for.

— PHIL FREEMAN

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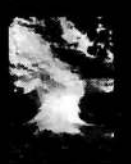

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Barbed Wire Soul continues in the direction that *Swansong* was going, and far beyond it. Saying that this is anything but a straight-up rock 'n' roll record would be misleading. Jeff Walker's voice still contains a little of his trademark growl, but if I hadn't been listening for it, I wouldn't have noticed. The riffs are very air-guitar friendly, and I think that is how they were meant to be listened to. This is just a downright fun album.

There are a couple of problems, notably the use of horns in a couple of the songs, which range from tolerable to extremely annoying. Also, the song "Rock 'n Roll Circus" lives up to its horrible title by being the worst song on the album. However, songs like "Smile," "Give Up the Ghost" and "Better the Devil" more than make up for these slips.

So, no, this is NOT the new Carcass. It's the debut of Black Star. If you hated *Swansong* and can't get that Carcass idea out of your head, steer clear. But if your mind is open, give *Barbed Wire Soul* a chance. Lock the doors, strap on your air-guitar, turn it up and have a blast.

— SCOTT WILCOX

Big Fun and *Dark Magus)* were recorded as live double-albums. All of them were recorded with six- or seven-piece bands, including up to three guitar players and as many percussionists. The concerts (and the resulting album-side-long tracks) were continuous jamfests, from the band's emergence upon the stage to the end of the night. And they were all totally and completely different from one another. The best evidence of this is found by listening to *Agharta* and *Pangaea,* two nearly opposite records recorded at two separate concerts on the same day in Tokyo. The result was four CDs worth of material, all of it brilliant, angry and incredibly challenging, not only to the listener but to any other musician who dared try to reach the mark Davis had set. And after these recordings, Davis turned his back and walked into his New York apartment, not to return to music for nearly six years.

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— PHIL FREEMAN

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cd TEST DRIVES

Reviews of extreme sounds from metal to jazz

Black Star
Barbed Wire Soul
Peaceville

As many metal fans know, *Barbed Wire Soul* is considered by many the new "Carcass" album. Even though three-fourths of the band are from the *Swansong* lineup, it was wise of them to change the band name.

Barbed Wire Soul continues in the direction that *Swansong* was going, and far beyond it. Saying that this is anything but a straight-up rock 'n' roll record would be misleading. Jeff Walker's voice still contains a little of his trademark growl, but if I hadn't been listening for it, I wouldn't have noticed. The riffs are very air-guitar friendly, and I think that is how they were meant to be listened to. This is just a downright fun album.

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— SCOTT WILCOX

Miles Davis
Dark Magus: Live at Carnegie Hall
Columbia/Legacy (reissue)

This record scared the living shit out of Columbia execs when it was first delivered in 1974. Frankly, 24 years later, it's still terrifying.

Miles Davis retired in 1975, but in the four years beforehand he shattered more musical boundaries than most musicians ever manage to run up against in their entire careers: He tore down the walls between psychedelia, funk, metal, jazz and 20th century classical music, forcing all of these genres to get onstage and dance with one another, live and uncut.

Most of his albums from this period (*In Concert, Agharta, Pangaea, Water Babies, Big Fun* and *Dark Magus)* were recorded as live double-albums. All of them were recorded with six- or seven-piece bands, including up to three guitar players and as many percussionists. The concerts (and the resulting album-side-long tracks) were continuous jamfests, from the band's emergence upon the stage to the end of the night. And they were all totally and completely different from one another. The best evidence of this is found by listening to *Agharta* and *Pangaea,* two nearly opposite records recorded at two separate concerts on the same day in Tokyo. The result was four CDs worth of material, all of it brilliant, angry and incredibly challenging, not only to the listener but to any other musician who dared try to reach the mark Davis had set. And after these recordings, Davis turned his back and walked into his New York apartment, not to return to music for nearly six years.

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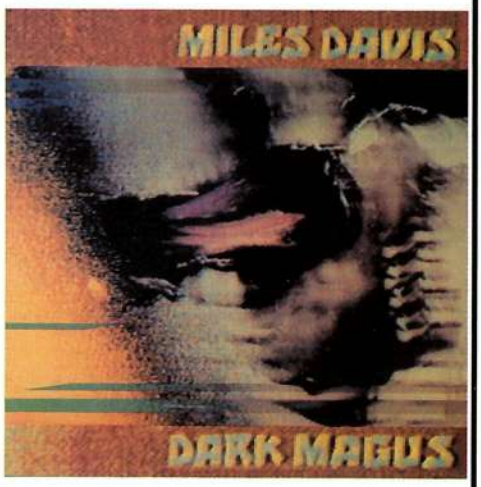

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— PHIL FREEMAN

Deceased
Fearless Undead Machines
Relapse

A concept album based on George Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy would be a natural for a death metal album, but, up until now, no one has done it. Enter Deceased, champions of no-frills death metal, and they've done a hell of a job.

If you are looking for cheesy wind sound effects and banshees shrieking in a forest, look elsewhere. This is pure death metal, which, as their press release says, "ignores all trends." And, by pure death metal, I don't mean hyper-blast drums and low growls in place of vocals. Deceased are very thrash-influenced, and this album manages to be brutal, melodic and technical all at the same time.

Fearless Undead Machines reminds me of *Master*-era Metallica. The songs are quite long (except for a couple of instrumental tracks that are basically just bridges between songs) and have a lot of rhythm and time changes, keeping them as interesting after 7 minutes as in the first minute. Musically, it is superb with great drum and vocal work from King Fowley, strong dual guitar attacks from Mike Smith and Mark Adams, and pounding bass from Les Snyder.

The actual "story" behind this concept album is a little disappointing, as nothing really happens until Track 8. Most of the preceding tracks' lyrics are very repetitive, theme-wise, describing the horrors of being hunted by the dead. But the lyrics themselves are well written, even if they don't really "say" a lot.

The icing on the cake is in the thank-you section, where each band member sends out personal greetings to posers such as Metallica, Rage Against the Machine, Pearl Jam, etc. Nice to see a band with balls!

—SCOTT WILCOX

Dissection
The Past is Alive (The Early Mischief)
Necropolis Records

The Past is Alive is the release I've anticipated from Necropolis the most. This is a collection of early stuff from the incredibly talented Dissection, never before available on disc.

First of all, if you have never heard Dissection before, this isn't the album to start with. But if you are a fan, this will have you drooling. Included is the entire *Into Infinite Obscurity* 7-inch, a track for *The Grief Prophecy* demo, four tracks from their promo for *The Somberlain,* a rehearsal track of "Severed into Shreds," and two rehearsal tracks by Satanized, Nodtveidt and Norman's other band.

Obviously, being culled from demos and rehearsal tapes, the sound quality leaves a little to be desired. During the rehearsal tracks, there are a few pops and skips that can be annoying. However, rest assured that these are the best recordings of these tracks available, as they were handpicked by the band themselves. For me, the joy of hearing these rare tracks outway any nitpicking about tape hiss.

I was hoping that their entire original demo would be included, but apparently the band didn't feel they were "up to snuff," as they had the final say on the track listing. A great CD chronicling the development of one of the most talented metal bands today.

—SCOTT WILCOX

METAL FROM THE UNDERGROUND

29 metal CDs reviewed by Ray Miller (rating scale 1–10)

Acheron
Anti-god, Anti-christ EP
Moribund

As much as I enjoyed this band's earlier material, I must admit that it was somewhat lacking in terms of production. That has been completely remedied with this stellar release. Clocking in at about a half hour, not only is the production amazing, but the playing is stunning, and of course the songs are as memorable as ever, and the spoken intros just as eerie. All the songs on here are monsters, but Acheron should get some kind of award for writing a classic like "Fuck the Ways of Christ." Only the spiritless Boyd Rice cover, "Total War," keeps this disc from perfection. (9.5)

Agarthi
At the Burning Horizon EP
Red Stream

After only a few listens, I was impressed by *At the Burning Horizon*. Agarthi skillfully combine a little black metal, some evil thrash, something like early Destruction, and keyboards to create a uniquely dark and 100-percent metal sound. The clear production helps their regal songwriting stand out. I hope a full-length is soon to follow. (9)

Bethlehem
Dictius Te Necare
Red Stream

The demise of Bethlehem's original singer has done nothing to calm this band down. If anything, *Dictius Te Necare* is actually more intense than their debut, *Dark Metal*. The music on *Dictius Te Necare* ranges from a vicious thrash onslaught (think along the lines of early Destruction), to moody, nearly ambient passages, and the vocals keep up, transforming from the most tortured of shrieks, to subdued whispers. Bethlehem dedicated the CD to all suicide victims, and after about 20 listens, I think I know why. . . . Where's my knife? (9)

The Chasm
From the Lost Years...
The Art / Reborn

Mournful, suicidal dirges give way to bursts of Dissection-like technical speed, or complex acoustic passages. Anguished screams rip their way to the surface, and tortured whispers lurk in the shadows. The decimation is absolute. (9.5)

Cianide
Death, Doom and Destruction
Lost Horizon

Long-time readers of my zine, *Metal Curse*, know already that this album is destined to get a perfect rating. Cianide have proven, time and time again, that they are the ultimate death metal band. They understand that their heavier-than-Godzilla songs must also be memorable, and they deliver on that in spades. This album is occasionally a little faster than Cianide's previous works, but it is executed flawlessly, and experimenting with the tempos seems to have only made them better. All bands should be required to listen to this album (and a

Genitorturers

Sin City

Cleopatra

I have really fond memories of Genitorturers shows. Back before their first album, *120 Days of Genitorture* (IRS Records), was released, they were a regular local band in Orlando, Florida, performing in the area several times a year. Well, they were never "regular." They were the most extreme — from the blood-spewing piercings of willing audience members to naked prancings (before the "no nudity" laws were put into effect) and spouting dildos — and undoubtedly the most fun.

But it was never really the music that drew me to the shows; it was the performances. And I was never even compelled to buy *120 Days of Genitorture*. Listening to the music without seeing locals get yanked around by Ruth the Dominitrix just wasn't the same. It was . . . I don't know . . . it was just *bla.*

It's been about five years since I've seen the Genitorturers live. They live in Tampa now. And for the first time since 1993, they have a new record out.

I put in *Sin City* to see what the band are up to, and, to my surprise, the CD has found a home on my rack. Not only has Gen's husband, "Evil" Dave Vincent (formerly of Morbid Angel), joined as bassist, but the band have embraced an electronic sound that totally works. I mean, I can see these tunes bringing Goths out of smokey club corners to dance (particularly "Crucified," which begins with Gen whispering "Drink of my body," and "Liars Lair," which opens with a striking similarity to the haunting keyboard sounds from the movie *Halloween* and continues with the lyrics "Hail to the freaks." Yeah, the Goths will love that.)

This is a definite musical accomplishment for the Genitorturers. If Cleopatra does the right kind of promoting, I wouldn't be surprised if their popularity follows suit of fellow Floridians Marylin Manson. I tell you, they've got the sound. Now it's all up to the marketing . . .

— CYNTHIA ARIEL CONLIN

Konkhra

Weed Out the Weak

Diehard/Progress

After listening to Konkhra's *Spit or Swallow,* I was very much looking forward to this album, especially since hearing that James Murphy (formerly of Obituary) and Chris Kontos had joined the band. But now that I've heard it, I'm disappointed.

After I listened to the first half, I got the impression that vocalist Anders Lundemark has been listening to a little too much Pantera. The songs are uninspired, and the vocals seem very weak, the only high points coming during Murphy's solos. Most of these songs are written totally by Lundemark. Things pick up in the second half (where the other band members collaborate more in the writing) with "The Reckoning," which is more of a return to the *Spit or Swallow*-style of memorable hooks and more powerful vocals. This continues up until the final track, "My Belief," which sounds even more like Pantera than the previous songs.

Overall, I would call only three tracks memorable: "The Reckoning," "Misery" and "Inhuman." Perhaps the fairly new lineup was the problem, or maybe the songwriting was rushed. Whatever the case, this was a huge letdown from the previous album; I only hope the next effort makes up for it.

— SCOTT WILCOX

select few others) to hear how it should be done. "Destroying the trends / Killing the false ones dead! / Headbanging 'til the end / METAL NEVER BENDS!" If that doesn't deserve a 10, nothing does. Buy this and support Cianide or I'll fucking murder you. (10)

Dawn

Sorgh Pa Svarte Vingar Flogh

Necropolis

These guys have an advantage over quite a few of their black metal peers: They can play their instruments. This really allows their unholy speed riffing to stand up and be counted. They're murderous on "Soil of the Dead Earth," and the rest are nearly as excellent. As an added plus, they cover Infern L.M. Jesty's "Night of the Living Dead," and make it their own. (8.75)

Divine Sin

Winterland

Black Mark

Fuck yes! That was my first thought upon hearing this. Divine Sin play very fierce thrash. Very fierce. Maybe along the lines of a Dark Angel/Demolition Hammer mix, if you can imagine such a thing. Fredde's vocals are mostly gruff, and honestly sound pretty unique. Then are the times when he uses a clean style, and is quite good at that, too. The band's playing and songwriting are easily as stunning as the excellent vocals. *Winterland* is a masterful album, that all fans of true Metal should worship. (9.75)

Endura

Black Eden

Red Stream

Man, this is a dark ambient fucking nightmare. It's unsettling to the point of nearly being horrifying, yet I am compelled to replay it as often as possible. I am possessed by the unclean spirit of overwhelming hopelessness captured within this recording. I've never heard anything darker or more depressing. Beyond belief. (10)

Grotesque

In the Embrace of Evil

Black Sun

This CD compiles Grotesque's legendary *Incantation* EP, six tracks recorded for an album that was never released, and two brand new cuts. Of course it goes without saying that members of this band went on to form Liers in Wait and the more well-known At the Gates, so that should give you an idea of what this sounds like if you don't already know. At long last this very influential band will have the recognition they deserve. (9.75)

Helheim

Fenris EP

Necropolis / Warmageddon

This band's Odinist black metal has a slight industrial feel thanks to a few interesting samples and the expertly programmed drums. Keyboards are also used to further underline to disquieting, ominous feeling created by these talented songwriters. The vocals are just as infernal as everything else, and unique as well; they are yelled of course, but the shrieks are used sparingly, and the dominant style is one of more restraint, but still unsettling. A truly varied and brave release. (8.75)

Hemdale/Exhumed

In the Name of Gore Split

Visceral

Two of the most brutal death/gore bands in the U.S. have teamed to deliver nearly an hour of utter fucking sickness. Hemdale are fearless in their cover of Destruction's "Curse the Gods," and maul their way through a dozen monsterpieces of their own. Exhumed are somehow more intense than Hemdale, which you'd not think possible until you hear them one right after the other, and in addition to their expected virulent, sickening death/grind, they try their hand at covering Possessed's "Death Metal." It takes balls to cover a Possessed song, and no small degree of skill to do one this well. (9.25)

In Memorian

Insantification

Rock Machine/Heavy Metal Rock

In Memorian have come up with what may be the best combination of black and death metal I've ever heard. I'd put these guys up against anyone you care to name. The use of keyboards and acoustic guitars is perfectly balanced with the relentlessly

Various artists
Untitled (ten)
Extreme Records

This two-disc set was released by Extreme to commemorate the label's first 10 years of existence in producing a music form that would eventually be named after the label. Extreme's roster — which includes Skúli Sverrisson, Merzbow, Groovy, Social Interiors and Pablo's Eye — lends itself to a sound: harsh, ambient instrumentals with washes of noise, found sounds, loops, dialogue samples and clipped beats.

Maybe I'm too jaded or just been into the many forms of underground music for too long, but nothing — even the full-on volume and white noise spray of Merzbow's "Decomposition 002.1.1" — struck me as "extreme." Good, certainly. Moody, and at times creepy-then-gorgeous, yes. Innovative, even. But anyone into ambient or noise-influenced music from the past 25 years — from Brian Eno, Throbbing Gristle and Controlled Bleeding to even Skinny Puppy or Atari Teenage Riot — will probably not view this compilation as pushing the sonic envelope.

That being said, I did, however, enjoy the music. Disc 1 features 10 artists who all fit very well next to each other. Pablo's Eye's "The Switchback" has a dub-like atmosphere (including a looped reggae guitar hit that is slowly filtered over the track's duration) and sparse, cut-up beats as a backdrop for dissonant tones and noises to drop in on. Tranquil and mesmerizing, if a little unsettling. Skúli Sverrisson's "Filma-mix" is a slab of an Eno-esque soundtrack (fine by me); cold electronic tones mingle with piercing ones and blasts of white noise. And, of course, there is no melodic reference point or structure.

Disc 2 — "Untitled (mix)," a full-length outing of 10 soundscapes by Social Interiors — concentrates on more beat-derived tracks with industrial and drum and bass/jungle rhythm influences taking hold.

Untitled (10) works very well in setting a mood, as soundtrack for your apartment late at night or as an audio collage. Just don't expect this to be an academic exercise in stretching musical boundaries, but those experiments are usually as boring as piss anyway.

— DANIEL FULLER

Meshuggah
The True Human Design
Nuclear Blast America

After looking at the track listing of this EP, one might wonder, "Why bother?" There is one new song ("Sane") and three versions of another song ("Future Breed Machine"). Couldn't these have just been tracks on the new album?

After listening to it, I still have the same opinion. Meshuggah's brand of Machine Head/Fear Factory-esqe metal is entertaining, but nothing so special it would make me rush out and buy this EP.

That said, I did enjoy the disc, especially the "Mayhem Version" of "Future . . ." This is an industrial/techno remix in the vein of Fear Factory's *Demanufacture*, and the additional effects enhance the song quite nicely. The "Campfire Version" (with the name changed to "Futile Bread Machine") is a hilarious, groovy unplugged version of the song. There are also two bonus tracks that can best be described as techno/ambient.

There is also a multi-media CD-ROM program on the CD, which includes a bio and a video and not much else. A nice little bonus for fans, but a ho-hum to anyone else.

— SCOTT WILCOX

murderous onslaught of guitar and drums. Each song is instantly extremely memorable, but upon repeated listens a great depth is revealed. Wilson's vocals are perhaps the best aspect of this recording: he has the most powerful and diverse death growl I've heard since Sick Nick Hernandez and Dysphoria parted ways. Insantification is in every way a classic. I am honored to bestow upon it the highest possible rating. (10)

Judecca
Beyond, What the Eyes Can't See...
Wild Rags

Even though the advance tape I got from the band isn't a first generation copy (far from it, I would guess), the power of the songs will leave you ripped and torn. In the cut "The Stench of an Undouched Cunt" they even have some Max Hardcore samples — it's goddamn hard to beat that kind of depravity, but they do it two songs later in their ode to necrophilia, "As We Fuck," Judecca is all things a death metal band could hope to be: brutal, sick, heavy, and memorable. The indicated rating is due to the imperfect sound quality of the advance tape. I would imagine that when this is finally released on CD the sound will be excellent and this a flawless album. [I have since received the finished CD for this amazing slab of devastation, and it indeed does sound far superior to the tape version that was reviewed above.] (9.75)

Lobotomy
Against the Gods/Nailed In Misery
Thrash Corner

The infamous Lobotomy were one of the first Swedish death metal bands to have balls enough to not record at Sunlight. This disc is a very welcome compilation of their long out of print *Against the Gods* and *Nailed In Misery* demos. Although for the most part Lobotomy don't stray too far from the traditional Death sound (think of early Unleashed), they are masters of the style and certainly bring their own identity to it. (9.5)

Malicious Hate
In the Name of Hate
Grinding Peace

OK here's the poop: the Malicious Hate tracks on here are blistering, intense death/grind. If you're weak, they'll kill you, fuck your corpse, and eat the remains. When I say intense, I am not bullshitting. These fucking freaks have been known to play (*Scum*-era) Napalm Death covers at twice their normal speed just for the fuck of it. And the vocals, you ask? Duke's style ranges from screams of unmitigated agony, to deep growls of insane horror. In other words, it's as brutal as the music. This is a masterful work of inhumanity and severity. Then, about 10 minutes of dead air after the last Malicious Hate song, the "hidden" bonus tracks start up. They're mostly pretty fucking bizarre noise constructions, although there is some other stuff, too (like the Memorium track from a split 7-inch they did with Symphony of Grief). Suffice to say that I like this kind of stuff, so it was a real plus for me. (9.5)

Necrocannibal
Somnambuliformic Possession
MetalAgen

Very energetic and speedy death metal with gory lyrics. It's not exactly a new concept, but when was the last time you heard of such a band from Russia? As you might expect, Necrocannibal reminds me of another Cannibal band, but unfortunately they don't have such a great production to back them up, although it isn't bad. If they had a heavier sound (probably an impossible task, given how expensive studios are in Russia), Necrocannibal would soundly pulverize bands in the league of Broken Hope. I can only hope that some big label executive will read this and make these guys an offer, or at least license the MetalAgen stuff for release in the States. (9.25)

Num Skull
When Suffering Comes
Defiled

I've been waiting nearly a decade for the follow-up to their inspirational *Ritually Abused* LP, and it has finally arrived. Let me assure you that it was worth every agonizing second of the wait. *When Suffering Comes* is death metal in a class by itself. Of course, I have made sure to get all of this band's demos since the aforementioned debut LP, so having heard virtually all of their recorded material, I can honestly

Six Feet Under
Warpath
Metal Blade

Judging by the two new songs, "Insects" and "Drowning," on Six Feet Under's *Alive and Dead* EP, I was skeptical about *Warpath*. "Insects" and "Drowning" are slow and plodding, with horrible production. But thank God . . . *Warpath* contains nothing like these.

I enjoyed *Haunted,* the band's debut, but this one kills it. *Haunted* had the problem of dragging toward the end, as all the songs sounded pretty much the same. Not so here. From the opener, "War is Coming," one can tell that every aspect of the band has improved. West's riffs no longer sound like rehashed Obituary stuff but stand on their own, giving Six Feet Under their own "sound." Barnes is at his best here, even varying his trademark growl occasionally, providing snatches of clean vocals now and then. The lyrics are not so gore-drenched anymore (which I consider an improvement); they even have a semi-political song in "Caged and Disgraced," about the stupidity of jailing drug users.

The songs are catchy as hell; I find myself growling along to "I'll kill 'til I die" in "Animal Instincts" and "Amputate my mind" in "Manipulation." Top to bottom, this is a very strong album. An added bonus is Six Feet Under paying tribute to their roots with a great cover of "Death Or Glory" by NWOBHM legends Holocaust.

It's not terribly original or ground-breaking, but damn if it isn't good! **—SCOTT WILCOX**

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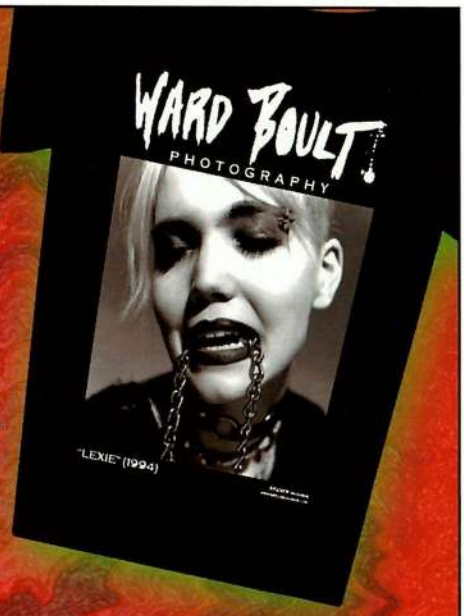

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say that this CD is their heaviest, most memorable and in short, best stuff ever — that's saying a lot. And as if their originals were not deadly enough, the disc-ender is a monstrous cover of Vemon's "Buried Alive." There is absolutely no excuse for not owning this. Now if someone would re-release their debut on CD, I could die happy. (10)

Oppressor
Agony
M.I.A.

There are a few technical flourishes here and there, but until I got to the fifth track, "Valley of Thorns," I was sure that Oppressor had given up their trademark innovation for a more straightforward, although not really more brutal, approach. Sadly, the very next track is well on its way back to the predictable, formulaic death of the first four. And while there are a few somewhat inventive passages in the final songs, and highly impressive playing throughout, the songwriting is for the most part very cut-and-dry. I have a feeling that these songs were written to be performed live, and probably are more powerful to experience in that way. I know it is often difficult to capture a band's live "energy" on a recording, but I miss the extreme complexity of their earlier stuff. (8)

Scabbard
Beginning of Extinction
Deathvastation / Morbid

Scabbard put their musical prowess to excellent use crafting this masterpiece of doomy death. It is exceptionally difficult to write complex songs that are both brutal and memorable (or, in many cases, either), but that is exactly what this band has done. They are not afraid to experiment with different tempos, acoustic guitars, and different vocal styles (all in the death domain). For many bands such attempts to be unique are not combined with the knowledge, skill, or luck to make them successful. Scabbard, however, make it sound easy. They know exactly what they're doing and never falter for an instant. Track this one down at all costs. (10)

Summon
Dark Descent of Fallen Souls
Grinding Peace

After the relaxing keyboard intro, they start up their fast black metal assault, and much like with their *Fire Turns Everything Black* demo, the only thing to really separate them from the crowd is their thick production, which if not for the vocals might make them sound like a grind band. Summon are certainly capable of writing interesting songs, and it's not often that you see some guys from Lansing, Michigan, in corpse paint, so I've got to give them credit for that. (8.25)

Vader
De Profundis
Conquest/Impact

Earache Records must be insane to have let these fiends slip away from them. This is every bit as intense as their full-length debut, *The Ultimate Incantation,* and the band seems to have left most of their experimental tendencies behind on their *Sothis* EP. Thus, *De Profundis* is all death, from the first second to the last — no bullshit, just destruction. So great is this recording that I would put it in the same league as the best from Cannibal Corpse or Deicide. And in an act of nearly unprecedented coolness, the U.S. (Conquest) version of this CD has an extra track, however it (a cover of Depeche Mode's "I Feel You") is by far the weakest track on this album, but as Johnny Hedlund once told me, "If you don't like our cover song, use the fast-forward button as Odin intended." (9.75)

Vondur
Stridsyfirlysing
Necropolis

If I didn't know better, I'd think that these two Abruptum alumni (It and All) were making fun of the current trends in black metal. They proudly proclaim that "Vondur plays untuned," they are apparently in favor of taking heroin, and "use the dark side of the force." Now I remember why I never liked Abruptum. This is completely unmusical, the mix is horrible, and I can not bring myself to take a band seriously who have a painting of Darth Vader on their album cover, even if the Empire is supposed to represent the "Ultimate Evil." In the Necropolis news update I got with this Frisbee, uhh, I mean CD, it is written that Vondurwill cover

VIDEO REVIEW

Type O Negative *After Dark* video (Roadrunner)

Gaining some insight into a band's collective personality is the formula to a successful video release. And the gold record-strutting Type O Negative have accomplished the goal, albeit in a limited way.

Rather than shooting a few concerts and then releasing them on a venerable live-in-concert video, the non-conformist foursome — Peter Steele, Josh Silver, Kenny Hickey and Johnny Kelly — threw together a few home videos of them hanging out on the road and on their home turf in Brooklyn, New York, as well as six music videos from songs off *October Rust* and *Bloody Kisses* to compile the 60-minute *After Dark* video.

Steele's Gothic persona is prevalent from the fangs that sometimes appear in his mouth, his all-black attire and the bondage-style cap he sports. Unfortunately, his well-documented, dry sense of humor is not displayed often.

The other members aren't featured as prominently in the music videos but are well represented in other aspects. For example, every time Kelly narrates a story or talks about himself, a mandolin is played in the background, making it seem like he certainly was absent from the editing booth when the video was being cut.

Another long-running gag is the constipation problem afflicting Silver on a tour, resulting in the most depraved shot on the tape — his pimply, hairy ass.

Portrayed as a guitar-playing simpleton, Hickey is surrounded by Gothic women in most of the video — which may be the reason he was too tired to speak.

Too many times though, it seems the band is concentrating on being cool instead of relaxing and being themselves, which is how their audience would most appreciate them. At times, it seems they cater to the lowest common denominator and don't act like the intelligent men they are believed to be.

Because of this, the star of the video is Kelly, who is the most candid and composed. One telling scene is at his home with his wife and infant daughter, as he gushes non-stop about how important his child is to him.

After Dark does provide a glimpse of Type O Negative's general behavior, including their offstage shenanigans on a Pantera tour. They are entertaining, but it's doubtful they are the clowns the video portrays them to be.

— ARY NUSSBAUM

Mötley Crüe's "Red Hot" on their up-coming mini-CD. Well, if that's not truly evil, nothing fuckin' is! (1)

Windham Hell
Window of Souls
Moribund

Here's a band that likes to keep all their bases covered. The first track is ambient, the next thrash/death (with an acoustic guitar interlude). For the most part, I couldn't make out much in the way of vocals, other than some growls, but this album does seem to have more lyrics than their debut. The experimentation with different styles, technical difficulty of the material, and the precision of the playing make this a must have for all musicians, and I think that the songs are intense and memorable enough to keep the interest of everyone else, too. (9)

Witch-Hunt
Prophecies of a Great Plague
X-Rated

The thick production adds the final necessary bit of sickness to this brutal slab of death. Precise playing, great riffs, monstrous vocals — 'nuff said. (9)

Various Artists
Extremist Records Comp. Vol. 1
Extremist

The layout/packaging leaves a lot to be desired, but the list of bands certainly does not. This is more than an hour of utterly brutal sickness, featuring tracks from Hemdale, Entropy, Corpse Vomit, Gonkulator, Lividity, Morticide, Haruspex, Abominant, Hot Stove, Impetus, Insanity, Ton and more. Addresses are given for all the bands, and the price ($5) is right. I'd say Extremist is off to a good start. (8.75)

Various Artists
Midnight Offerings III
With Your Teeth

Deceased's main man, King Fowley, has compiled 15 tracks (70-plus minutes) of the most underground music you're likely to hear. Most of the bands are from the United States, but two (Terror Squad and Voidd) represent Japan. Some of the recordings are fairly low quality, such as Virginia's Northern Lights, but for the most part this is a very enjoyable and diverse release, showcasing everything from old-style thrash to new-wave black metal, and everything in between. (8.75)

Various Artists
Nordic Metal:
A Tribute to Euronymous
Necropolis

This is an absolute must for all black metal fans. It's got unreleased tracks from Abruptum (which is a band I usually don't much like, but this is certainly one of their best efforts), Emperor, Mysticum, Thorns, Mayhem and Mortiis, as well as fairly obscure tracks from Dissection and rare Mayhem and Emperor cuts. The remaining bands are Marduk, Opthalamia (covering "Deathcrush"), Enslaved and Arcturus. What more do you need to know? Do not hesitate in obtaining this disc! (9.75)

Various Artists
Slaytanic Slaughter II:
A Tribute to Slayer
Black Sun

Covers I thought were extremely well done: "Die By the Sword" done by Necrophobic, "Hell Awaits" by Cradle of Filth, "Silent Scream" by Vader, "Dead Skin Mask" by Unanimated and "Seasons in the Abyss" by Disaffected. Embarrassing attempts (it's the vocals in these I don't like): "Angel of Death" by Liers in Wait, "Epidemic" by Coffin Man and "Raining Blood" by Malevolent Creation. Although this does have a few less-than-stellar performances, I think it's a worthy tribute to such an influential band. (8.75)

Various Artists
Winds of a New Millennium #1
Demise

Fourteen Brazilian bands contributed to this, and, unless you are more familiar with the Brazilian death-metal scene than I, you've probably only heard of a few of them. But don't let that fool you, because there isn't a weak track on here. Only the lack of more unreleased material (although all this is pretty obscure) keeps this from a perfect rating. (9.75) J

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